Gennadi Barabtarlo

PHANTOM OF FACT

A Guide to Nabokov's **Pnin**

Ardis, Ann Arbor

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Contents

Preface 9
List of Abbreviations 11

INTRODUCTORY NOTES

1. History of the Text 13
2. Chronology 15
3. Cast 16
4. Structure. Thematic Lines. Theory 18
5. Format and Principles 43

COMMENTARY

Chapter One 55
Chapter Two 87
Chapter Three 115
Chapter Four 149
Chapter Five 191
Chapter Six 219
Chapter Seven 265

APPENDICES

Dramatis Personae 291
Chronograph 296
Toponymy 299
Flora and Fauna 301
Chromatograph 303

Bibliography 309

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Preface

A version of the present work was written in 1984 as a doctoral dissertation at the University of Illinois. When, three years thereafter, I began preparing this volume for publication, my intention was to have put before the student of Nabokov's *Pnin* a slightly trimmed edition of the earlier text. Fairly soon, however, I saw that "trimming," as applied to my method of revising, pertained more to the way one adorns a cut tree than to the pruning of a live one. One's dissertation needn't breed in its author nothing but contempt two years later, but on examination the omissions of matter proved to be so numerous, and the flaws of style so glaring, as to require an unreserved revamping; and although this is exactly what has been done, the text as it emerged from my intensive care does bear scars of grafting patchwork, some disguised, others not.

One of the shortcomings is bibliographical in essence. The flood of Nabokov literature in the eighties, and especially during the last five years, has risen with such tremendous force and volume that most works brought out before seem by comparison literally antedeluvian, while it is becoming exponentially harder to keep up even with new publications, to say nothing of the fresh crop of Ph.D. theses. I have moved the initial cut-off date (1983) two years forward (in a few instances as many as four), mostly in order to acknowledge the priority of certain ideas, congenial to mine but couched better, cast farther, and published earlier, which I found in the 1985 works by Pekka Tammi and especially Brian Boyd (items C-46 and C-14 in the *Bibliography*). The former is, to my mind, the most comprehensive field guide to Nabokov craftsmanship to date; the latter, a deep and clear treatise of Nabokov's artistic ontology, where "new horizons loom on every page" (as William James said of another philosophical work).

Another flaw issues from the double vision of the reader in my rangefinder. On the one hand, he is a Nabokov scholar using this book as a reference; on the other, he is a dilettante student of *Pnin*, a first time re-reader, who uses it as a road guide, or rather as one of those recorded portable tours that visitors to National Parks pick up at the foot of the trail winding up to a famed peak. To the first kind of reader some commentaries will seem excessive, while other readers may find the author much too reticent on occasion. But I tried to gloss every spot in the novel that had even a smallest textual knag—or what seemed a knag to me when I translated *Pnin* into Russian, when I studied it as a subject of my doctoral research, and when I later taught it in a college course on Nabokov.

Many readers will find the absence of an index baffling. I pondered

the idea of having a regular name and even subject index, and abandoned it because of the very nature of my commentary which consists of usually brief, rigorously cross-referenced notes and, in a sense, carries a running index within its body. Special attention has been paid to parallel readings of various Nabokov texts and to their concordance. Besides, five onomastic and thematic lists (in the Appendices) and four bibliographical ones should compensate, one hopes, for the absence of the familiar reference tool.

Somewhat different versions of four larger notes on Chapters Six, Four (two notes), and Three, have appeared previously in Nos. 8, 12, 16, and 20 of *VNRN*, respectively, between 1982 and 1988.

Sections gathered under the title *Introductory Notes* have been written anew.

My special gratitude is due to Professor Christine Rydel who has meticulously reviewed and criticized in detail the present volume in manuscript, which saved it from many solecisms and in general made it less imperfect. I also wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to professors Clayton Dawson, Maurice Friedberg, and Temira Pachmuss of the University of Illinois, who have tendered their judicious suggestions upon reading the text of my dissertation, and to Professor Brian Boyd, for his letting me use material pertaining to *Pnin*'s publication history from his upcoming biography of Nabokov. I am most grateful to Mrs. Vladimir Nabokov who, while combing my Russian translation of *Pnin*, let me profit by her valuable comments, and who kindly allowed me to print here some previously unpublished excerpts from Nabokov's letters. I thank Miss Sherry Stanton, a student of mine, and my daughter Mary, for creating the graph for one of the appendices, and especially Mrs. Ellendea Proffer and Mr. Ronald Meyer of Ardis, whose generous and good-humored patience is seldom encountered, in this degree, among publishers.

Without my wife's steadfast assistance there would have been no book.

Abbreviations of Frequently Cited Works*

I. Titles of Nabokov's Works

BS. *Bend Sinister.*
DS. *Details of a Sunset.*
EO. *Eugene Onegin, A Novel in Verse by Aleksandr Pushkin.*
G. *The Gift.*
IB. *Invitation to a Beheading.*
LD. *Laughter in the Dark.*
KQK. *King, Queen, Knave.*
LECTURES. *Lectures on Literature.*
LECTURES—R. *Lectures on Russian Literature.*
L. *Lolita.*
LATH. *Look at the Harlequins!*
ND. *Nabokov's Dozen.*
N—W. *The Nabokov—Wilson Letters. 1940—1971.*
PF. *Pale Fire.*
RLSK. *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight.*
RB. *A Russian Beauty.*
SM. *Speak, Memory.*
SO. *Strong Opinions.*
TT. *Transparent Things.*

II. Collections and Periodicals.

APPEL—NEWMAN. *Nabokov: Criticism, Reminiscences, Translations, Tributes.*
GIBIAN—PARKER. *The Achievements of Vladimir Nabokov.*
NICOL—RIVERS. *Nabokov's Fifth Arc.*
PROFFER. *A Book of Things About Vladimir Nabokov.*
QUENNEL. *Vladimir Nabokov: A Tribute.*
VNRN. *The Nabokovian.*

*See Bibliography for full citations.

III. Books and Articles about Nabokov.

Appel-L. Introduction to *The Annotated "Lolita."*
Bodenstein. *The Excitement of Verbal Adventure.*
Boyd. *Nabokov's "Ada": The Place of Consciousness.*
Carroll. "Nabokov's Signs and Symbols." In *PROFFER.*
Connolly—P. "*Pnin:* The Wonder of Recurrence and Transformation." In *NICOL—RIVERS.*
Field—67. *Nabokov: His Life in Art.*
Field—77. *Nabokov: His Life in Part.*
Lubin. "Motley and Kickschaws." In *APPEL—NEWMAN.*
Nicol. "Pnin's History." In *Novel.*
Olcott. "The Author's Special Intention: A Study of *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight." In PROFFER.*
Rowe—D. *Nabokov's Spectral Dimension.*
Tammi. *Problem's of Nabokov's Poetics: A Narratological Analysis.*

References to the articles in my Introductory Notes are encoded *IN,* followed by a Roman and, if need be, an Arabic numeral, which point to the chapter and section number, respectively.

Introductory Notes

I. History of the Text.

Pnin was begun late in the spring of 1953, probably after May 3 and certainly before June 20, between Portal, Arizona, and Ashland, Oregon, on one of the Nabokovs' "lepping" summer excursions. In a letter to Wilson of June 20 of that year, Nabokov writes: "...I have just started a series of stories about a creature of mine, a Professor Pnin, which I hope the *New Yorker* will be interested in."[1] This is the first published mention of the novel. The magazine indeed accepted the first chapter, which appeared there in the issue of November 28, 1953, under the title "Pnin." In January of 1954 Nabokov wrote Chapter Two and began negotiations with Pascal ("Pat") Covici of Viking. On February 3, he sent Covici *Pnin*'s summary, with this important conclusion:

> Then, at the end of the novel, I, V.N., arrive in person to Waindell College to lecture on Russian literature, while poor Pnin dies, with everything unsettled and uncompleted, including the book Pnin had been writing all his life.[2]

In a letter of March 25, which could be a reply to this or to a later one, Pascal Covici, who seems to have been Nabokov's great votary, wrote, quite disingenuously, that he was disturbed by the novel's projected ending and that

> Pnin, who is the hero of the story, should not, at least I now believe, become an heroic, tragic figure. [...] His death, he being the hero, would give him an heroic semblance which to me would be false. It would be no catharsis to justify its cruelty; it would merely leave the reader disappointed. It would come closer to a sardonic masochism which would leave the reader with a bitter rather than a pleasurable feeling.

Nabokov apparently stopped discussing the matter with Covici for a while; nevertheless, on July 30, 1954, he reported to Wilson that he had signed a contract with Viking "for my book on Pnin," but added that he would not finish it "before the end of the winter."[3] He did not. On February 19, 1955 Nabokov writes Wilson that the novel "about the Russian professor Pnin is progressing very slowly. Another chapter has been bought by the *New Yorker*."[4] This was Chapter Three, sent to the magazine on February 1; it appeared there, under the title "Pnin's Day," on Nabokov's birthday, 23 April, 1955. On March 10, Nabokov writes again to Wilson: "The *New Yorker* paid me generously for my Pnin piece [i.e., Chapter Three]. I hope to finish the book—which I have already sold to Viking—sometime in June."[5]

The day following the publication of the third chapter, Véra Nabokov, in a letter to Wilson, mentioned that Nabokov was "up to his chin in *Pnin*,"[6] and in July Nabokov was still working on the novel full speed: "I cannot leave Ithaca until I finish my Pnin book. I have sold the *New Yorker* yet another installment."[7] He meant the future Chapter Four, entitled "Victor Meets Pnin" in the *New Yorker*; it was published in the October 15, 1955 issue.

On August 29, 1955, Nabokov mailed to Viking Press the entire novel, then named *My Poor Pnin*. However, sometime in the fall of that year the deal with Viking was dissolved. As Mrs. Nabokov recollects, "Covici liked the book very much but, oddly, asked that it be lengthened, upon which VN took his text back."[8] But at the same time, an interesting exchange concerning poor Pnin's fate erupted between his maker and Katharine White, one of the *New Yorker*'s creators and a staunch admirer of Nabokov's art. In a letter of 14 September (which I have not seen) she seems to suggest an ending that resembles the magazine version of what is now Chapter Six. By coincidence or otherwise, this plea was, surprisingly, heeded: in response to her letter, Nabokov writes Mrs. White on 25 September: "I have also changed the ending. I hope you will like it as much as I do." And on 15 October, he sends her the paragraph which later appeared (somewhat modified) at the end of section six, Chapter Six, on page 153 of the *editio princeps*, clearly linking the Bowl motif to the new conclusion of the chapter: "Impelled by you, dear Katharine, I have evolved the following passage while taking my morning bath: "Pnin eyed the bowl with pleased surprise..." etc. till "...he told Betty," as in the *New Yorker* which placed the installment in its November 12 issue ("Pnin Gives a Party").[9]

If it is true that "two chapters of *Pnin* were rejected [by the *New Yorker*],"[10] then they ought to have been Chapters Two and Five, for I tend to suppose that Nabokov wished to withhold the solution to the plot obtained in the last, seventh chapter till the novel was published as a separate, hermetic whole.[11] On the other hand, Mr. Boyd tells me that all three chapters unpublished in the *New Yorker* had provisional titles in the MS, which may indicate Nabokov's intention to have the entire book serialized: "Pnin Had Not Always Been Single." (Two); "Pnin Under the Pines." (Five); and "I Knew Pnin." (Seven).

In December of 1955 Nabokov was casting about anew for a publisher. On the 6th, he sums up the plot of the novel in a letter to Mr. Canfield of Harper and Brothers:

> In Pnin, I have created an entirely new character, the like of which has never appeared in any other book. A man of great moral courage, a pure man, a scholar and a staunch friend, serenely wise, faithful to a single love, he never descends from a high plane of life characterized by authenticity and integrity. But handicapped and hemmed by his inability to learn a language, he seems a figure of fun to many an average intellectual,

and it takes a Clements of a Joan Clements to break through Pnin's fantastic husk and get at his tender and lovable core.

Harper evidently was not interested, and on August 14, 1956, Nabokov informs Wilson that he sold the novel to Doubleday[12] where it was at last published on March 7, 1957, with a dust-jacket depicting Pnin holding a book entitled *Pnin*, in Russian characters. (See Nabokov's letter to Jason Epstein on the matter in note 7.6).

There exists a mimeographed Doubleday "in-house" copy, now at the Humanities Research Center of the University of Texas at Austin, and a proof copy of the parallel London (Heinemann, 1957) edition.[13] In 1959, the Avon branch of Doubleday put out a paperback edition which was followed by numerous others.[14] Nabokov included the novel *in toto* in *Nabokov's Congeries* (Viking, New York, 1968; reprinted as *The Portable Nabokov*, New York, 1971). Chapter Three was published in *Modern Short Stories—The Uses of the Imagination* (edited by Arthur Mizener; New York: Norton, 1962; reprinted by Atheneum in 1964). Chapter Five was included in *Fiction and Analysis* (edited by Robert Canzoneri and Page Stegner; Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1970).

Pnin's manuscript, as if imitating its hero's paper-handling mishaps in the opening chapter and elsewhere, happens to be one of the very few important Nabokov MSS that have been mislaid, perhaps, irretrievably. Less than two years after the book's publication, Nabokov wrote to Mr. David Mearns of the Library of Congress (to which he donated some of his archives): "I have become much more careless of late as regards my recent manuscripts. *Pnin* may be lying at the bottom of a chest. *Lolita*, however, was written on index cards."[15] There is no trace of *Pnin*'s manuscript at Nabokov's residence in Montreux, Switzerland. Two pages with "Notes for Pnin's Life," preserved in Container No.8 (folder 10) at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.,[16] appears to be all that is left of the novel's drafts.

II. Chronology.

The notes in the commentary keep careful track of *Pnin*'s chronology which is then summarized in Appendix B.

There are two generic kinds, or rather levels, of novelistic chronology: "concurrent," which arranges actual sequence of events in the narration, however tangled their nexus might be; and "retrograde," which queues up events recollected *within* the novel, in the pluperfect of a character's memory, as it were. What follows is an exposition of the "concurrent" level of *Pnin*'s chronology as it appears in the book (the *New Yorker* version varies significantly in this respect). For page references to the episodes described below, see Appendix B.

The novel opens on a Friday in October of 1950. It could be, of course, any one of the four possible Fridays that month, the 6th, the 13th, the 20th, or the 27th; but for convenience's sake we shall assume that Friday the thirteenth is a perfect day for the monstrous heap of mishaps that Pnin is put to suffer in the first chapter. Chapter Two begins at the end of 1951, around Christmas (a winter break at Waindell is in progress). Liza Wind visits Pnin early in spring of the following year (Victor is twelve years old in 1952; Pnin walks through the snow-patched park).

Chapter Three poses a difficult chronological quodlibet discussed at length in note 67.3. Suffice it to say here that the day of Chapter Three, "Pnin's Day," cannot be Tuesday, February 15, 1953, despite N—'s (the chronicler of Pnin's life) pellucid, but misleading, hints; rather, it is either Tuesday, February 10 (the anniversary of Pushkin's death) or February 15 *in the Old Style*, which was in use in Russia.

The events of Chapter Four are set in Spring, 1954, shortly before Easter (April 18 that year): Victor, who was born in June, 1940, is said to be fourteen now. Pnin arrives at The Pines (Chapter Five) late in May or early in June that year, to judge by the blooming Northern Catalpas.[17] He gives his party in Chapter Six at the beginning of the Fall semester, late in September or early in October, 1954. And finally, N— arrives at Waindell on the 14th of February, 1955, while Pnin leaves the town and the novel next morning, on his birthday—which did fall on Tuesday that particular year.

III. *Pnin*'s Cast.

The novel engages a stupendous number of participating personages (over three hundred—see Appendix A). Surely, there are novels more populous—although few serious books, if any, can exceed *Pnin*'s characters-per-page ratio. But the striking effect of Nabokov's intricate and new art of prose removes the inevitable feeling of an overcrowded world which besets the reader of those famous books. The great number of characters derives, in part, from Nabokov's consistent use of the Gogolian device of stocking fiction with peripheral personae whose very existence in the novel often depends on purely syntactic means (especially in long, ramified periods), and who have little or no bearing on the plot's propulsion. Nabokov dwells on this method in his book on Gogol (1944) and in his Cornell lectures.[18] My notes often advert to this device.

The Sheppard family furnishes the best-branched example. It is represented in the novel by Bill Sheppard, Pnin's landlord (Chapter Four), his brother, his recently deceased wife, his mother's schoolmate, Grace Wells and her son Charlie (the whole spreading bunch crops up on p.107), plus Bill's distant relative John Head (p.110). Three more members of the clan appear in Chapter Six: Bill's uncle Martin (p.144), Mrs. Sheppard

(probably, the uncle's widow), and her eldest son (p.159). None of them is much more than a super, none has a distinct face (although the two brothers do appear in person in the book).

Nabokov regularly employs a complementary, and, in a sense, contrary strategy of introducing into *Pnin* personages apriori familiar to its readers—a device cleverly used in *Eugene Onegin*, as Nabokov fondly notes in his commentary to the novel. One *Pnin* character medically treats Tolstoy; another may be treated by Dr. Chekhov; still others hobnob with Kerenski and argue about Bunin and Sirin. The actor may be the author's personal acquaintance, for example, an actual president of an actual college Nabokov once visited as guest lecturer (see n. 148.21), which should make the reference enclosed and its effect totally private, but that changes only the range and direction of the device's application, not its mechanism. A concert of these techniques creates an air of unassailable plausibility of a fictional world.

The effect of turning realia into *realiora* intensifies when the author injects into this world a dose of accurate references to authentic sources which can be checked by the reader: to the Vengerov edition of Shakespeare in Russian, to a book by Samuel Sloan, or to an even more obscure monograph by one Dr. Chistovich. What is more, these true citations are intersprinkled with entirely fictitious ones, such as Kostromskoy's book on Russian pagan rites ("Moscow, 1855").[19]

On the other hand, a slight adjustment or merely a shift of familiar accent in presenting well-known persons produces a subtle but distinct "not-quite-of-this-world" sensation.[20] Quite obviously, the strategy is antinomic: the appearance of Leo Tolstoy or Chekhov in the novel drags a fragment of the reader's world into fiction and makes it more plausible, yet the "fact" that the totally phantasmal Dr. Pavel Antonovich Pnin should treat Tolstoy's conjuctivitis, or that Anton Pavlovich Chekhov should be merely a "Dr.," makes *Pnin*'s universe transcendental and a little eerie, and, indeed, more otherwordly than the one in which none of the characters bears resemblance to "actual persons, living or dead" (as the stock but sly disclaimer to *Pnin* puts it). When an "actual person" meets a figmental one on the latter's ground, the point of contact is a light-emitting chink, but also a source of contradiction, for it at once emanates credibility and incongruity, at once creates the effect of "naturalization" (to borrow Arthur Lake's coinage) and of "estrangement" (Victor Shklovski's "ostranenie").

Nabokov purposely and deftly sets up this antinomy. Fact and phantom tinge one another, and although in a good novel the factitious always overcomes and absorbs the factual, the resulting environment is masterly colorable, *vraisemblable*.

IV. Structure. Thematic Lines. Theory.

1.

The novel in its final form consists of seven chapters. "I do not begin my novel from the beginning," Nabokov once said.[21] But unlike his other English books after *Bend Sinister*, *Pnin* was composed in natural progression, from the beginning to the end. In an interview with Alfred Appel, Jr., Nabokov said: "... the design of *Pnin* was complete in my mind when I composed the first chapter which, I believe, in this case was actually the first of the seven I physically set down on paper."[22] Originally, Nabokov intended to write one more chapter which was to appear between Chapters Four and Five of the final version. The chapter did not materialize, but we know that Nabokov meant to describe Pnin's tussle with driving manuals and instructors.[23]

First reviews of the book adopted a woefully superficial approach to *Pnin*'s composition: critics saw it merely as a series of episodes rather loosely strung together and not making up a construction sufficient to sustain a novel. Even a work published much later voices the same slipshod opinion (bombastically worded to boot): "...in its final form [*Pnin*] seems in many ways to be more or less a series of sketches than a novel."[24]

Actually, the book's structure is extremely tight and its parts cooperate in a most ingenious and precise fashion. "*Pnin* is as complicated as a pet snake," writes Charles Nicol in an important essay,[25] and the comparison is especially apt because the novel's composition indeed *suummet rodit*, bites its own tail—or the shadow of a tail. As Nicol further states, the whole structure of the novel describes a full thematic circle ending as it does with a version of the very episode that opens the book: Pnin's guest lecture at a Women's Club.

But then every chapter of *Pnin* forms a smaller spheroid of its own. The two glaring exceptions are the fringe chapters One and Seven, both because they serve as the novel's entrance and exit—parts of overriding importance with very special structural assignments—and because these chapters are not only outward-facing but also facing each other. Since they interlink across the entire globe of the text, these two critical chapters must retain open ends for proper coordination and coupling.

The very first paragraph of *Pnin* introduces the hero riding on a (wrong) train to a small town to give a lecture; at the end of the chapter, he is left standing at the lectern, the last of his after-seizure ephemera gradually fading. It is not impossible that at the moment he does hold the wrong lecture in his hands, just as Cockerell says in the last sentence of the book (but see below). Chapter Two opens to the sound of the Waindell chimes, replaced by the ringing of the Clementses' telephone (a call from Pnin who wants to rent a room) and ends with a close-up of Joan Clements abstractly examining a local magazine cover with the Waindell belfry on it

(while Pnin yields to his utter despair). Chapter Three begins with a description of Pnin's successive uncomfortable, sound-leaking lodgings and closes at the point when Pnin will have to vacate the first room in which he feels really at home.

Chapter Four, which is central both compositionally and thematically, has been the subject of more thorough scrutiny than any other chapter.[26] Victor Wind dreams of his imaginary father, a lonely and betrayed King, at the beginning of the chapter; at the end of it Pnin (Victor's "water father," as his real father, Eric Wind, jokes—more aptly, perhaps, than he supposes) sees a sequel to Victor's fantasy in his own dream. Actually, both parts of that encircling dream use the "illegible (to either Victor or Pnin) lines" of Nabokov's drafts, stemming from his Russian fragments "Ultima Thule" and "Solus Rex," whose themes were later transferred to *Pale Fire*).

In Chapter Five the woods of "beautiful New England," viewed from the top of a tower, fill the opening landscape with peaceful vistas. However, towards the end they imperceptibly grade into, and finally are momentarily replaced by, the ominous German forest where Pnin's sweetheart was murdered in one of the Nazi extermination camps situated at the core of a serene environment, a German cultural memorial. At the beginning of Chapter Six, a new semester at Waindell routinely commences and Pnin finds a suitable home at long last; at the end, he must give up both his position at the university and the hope of purchasing the house. The last chapter revisits every preceding one, briefly inspecting the major themes and completing the circular configuration as its last sentence brings the reader back to the book's starting point.[27]

These concentric circles making up six or seven episodes of Pnin's life which span four and a half years of "concurrent time" and more than half a century of retrospection, make up something akin to an epicyclic train, with one geared wheel moving around the circumference of another.[28] They are decidedly not separate sketches hastily knocked together to simulate a novelistic structure. They are braced with tie rods and belt pulleys of intertwining themes that cover distances of different length but precise itinerary. It is the armature of these thematic rods, and not the story development as such, that raises and sustains the firmament of the novel's universe.

In a footnote to his lectures on Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* Nabokov calls plot a "supposed story," while thematic lines are "images or an idea which is repeated here and there in the novel, as a tune reoccurs in a fugue." And the structure is "the composition of a book, a development of events, one event causing another, the cunning way characters are brought in, or a new complex of action is started, *or the various themes are linked up or used to move the novel forward.*"[29]

In discussing the themes found in *Pnin* in the commentary of this book, I distinguish between the global, or *stringcourse*, themes which run

across the entire novel connecting its parts, and local, or *drawstring*, themes whose range is usually limited to one chapter and which close that chapter as a drawstring pouch.[30] Good examples of the latter kind would be the "Geography Theme" and the "Rain Theme" of Chapter Four, or the "Bell Theme" of Chapter Two. Sometimes a local theme evolves into a stringcourse one, e.g. the "Gesture Theme" of Chapter Two. Nabokov's nimble manipulation of thematic threads—a knot here, a pull there—creates a magnificent lacework resembling a cobweb in plan, with crosscutting strings reaching far and near, and almost suggesting a spider hiding somewhere in the shade and holding all ends. Nabokov certainly looked for and admired this technique in other novels. "In discussing *Bleak House*," he wrote to Wilson, "I completely ignored all sociological and historical implications, and unravelled a number of fascinating thematic lines (the "fog theme," the "bird theme," etc.)."[31] And in his lecture on *Ulysses*, Nabokov claims that "the recurrence of a number of themes is one of the most striking features of the book."[32]

I should like to sketch the course of two very important global themes which resurface in nearly every chapter. The first is the theme of optical reflection. In Chapter One it is "the gleam of a tumbler, the brass knob of [Pnin's] bedstead" which "interfered even less with the oak leaves and rich blossoms than would the reflection of an inside object in a windowpane with the outside scenery perceived through the same glass" (24). Pnin sees this in a mesmeric flashback, and one will discern here an additional motif of aberration, of a slight but insuperable incongruity between things perceived and reflected. Chapter Two has "the slow scintillant downcome [...] reflected in the silent looking glass" (34). In Chapter Three, when Pnin raises his tired eyes from the book and trains them on the window above, "through his dissolving meditation ... there appeared the violet-blue air of dusk, silver-tooled by the reflection of the fluorescent lights of the ceiling, and, among spidery black twigs, a mirrored row of bright book spines." (78). In contrapuntal Chapter Four the theme of reflection looms large. What seems at first glance a purely technical topic grows in scope and significance on second reading and becomes a model of the plot growth. Especially interesting are pages 98-99 (the book's exact geometric and focal center), where Victor experiments with reflections of various objects which change their shape, if not essence, when seen through water, so that

> the red apple became a clear-cut red band bounded by a straight horizon, half a glass of Red Sea, Arabia felix. The short pencil, if held obliquely, curved like a stylized snake, but if held vertically became monstrously fat—almost pyramidal. The black pawn, if moved to and fro, divided into a couple of black ants. The comb, stood on end, resulted in the glass's seeming to fill with beautifully striped liquid, a zebra coctail. (99)

The general distortion of Pnin's life as related by N— somehow corresponds to these optical refractions (see sections Three and Four below). On the other hand, Cockerell, a lesser fictionist himself, unveils Pnin's story in a rapid series of the more or less crudely comic anecdotes which depict the true Pnin with much less clarity than the "Petite Histoire" of Russian culture (Pnin's research) "reflect[s] in miniature [...] Major Concatenations of Events" (76). In Chapter Five, a detailed description of the Cooks' house's interior mentions the "morose étagères with bits of dark-looking glass in the back as mournful as the eyes of old apes" (124), which brings to mind the "microcosmic version of a room [...] in that very special and very magical small convex mirror that, half a millenium ago, Van Eyck and Petrus Christus and Memling used to paint into their detailed interiors" (98). In the penultimate chapter another list of furniture includes

> a pair of crystal candlesticks with pendants [...] responsible in the early mornings for iridescent reflections, which glowed charmingly on the sideboard and reminded my sentimental friend of the stained-glass casements that colored the sunlight orange and green and violet on the verandas of Russian country houses. (146)

Apart from the quite special theme of the stained glass harlequinade (frequent in *Pnin*—see n. 146.3), this magic inventory evokes Pnin's private past in optical terms remindful of the above-cited description in Chapter One; thus the thematic spiral makes yet another involution.

Chapter Seven contains an extensive review of this theme (along with many others). In a sense, the chapter can be read as an elaborate metaphor of this train of images, for it appears to be an enormous looking glass reflecting Pnin's life with an indefinite degree of aberration. "There is a focal shift here," says Nabokov in his lecture on Proust's novel, "which produces a rainbow edge: this is the special Proustian crystal through which we read the book [...] Proust is a prism. His, or its, sole object is *to refract*, and by refracting to *recreate* a world in retrospect."[33] Mark the triple "re-" in the quotation: this is indeed *Pnin*'s leitmotif, because N—, the novel's minor creator, recreates Pnin's past through his imagination and designs.

Another emblematic image recurring in every chapter with scheduled regularity is the squirrel. Several *Pnin* scholars have lingered here, and in my commentary I discuss each appearance of the intrusive rodent in due place. Charles Nicol thinks that the squirrel theme runs close to the "glass theme" represented in the novel by Victor and that "squirrels are not symbols for Pnin, shorthand to represent him, or reductions of him, but only themes associated with him."[34] Both thematic lines do conflow when Cinderella's shoes are mentioned in Chapter Six: the *pantoufles* are made

not of glass (*verre*) but of ermine, or even squirrel, fur (*vair*).* Nicol further sees meaningful reciprocity in Pnin's sending Victor a postcard with a Gray Squirrel on it in Chapter Four and in Victor's sending Pnin a "glass punch-bowl of 'Cinderella' color"[35] a few months later.

W. W. Rowe has attempted to interpret the ubiquitous squirrel as a metempsychic incarnation of Mira, Pnin's dead fiancée, who guides his life and interferes at critical turns.[36] But although Rowe seems to have found himself in the right forest, his equipment is quite useless, for one does not hunt harlequins with an harquebus à croc.[37]

The Squirrel is as much a master emblem in *Pnin* as a posy of violets is in *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, or the oblong puddle in *Bend Sinister*, or the sun-glasses in *Lolita*. It turns up at various places in the book, once in every chapter, in different guises and situations. There seems to be a compositional link (which Rowe, curiously, does not exploit although he might find it profitable) between the squirrel's appearance in a chapter and Pnin's pending misfortune in that chapter. Pnin naturally fails to notice a system in the recurrences but the attentive reader, unencumbered by the novel's temporal (and thus aetiological) conditions, will see in them segments of the general design.

In the first chapter Pnin confronts the squirrel at the most urgent point of his rememorative "spell": it hops from the nursery screen of his febrile past onto the ground of the unfriendly environs of Whitchurch as he desperately gropes for a key to the riddle of his existence. In the next chapter, Pnin encounters the creature after Liza's burlesque and painful visit, as he trudges back from the bus station utterly forlorn. Here again he sees the squirrel at the point when he thinks he is on the verge of grasping his universe's main, all-resolving principle. In Chapter Three Pnin stumbles and almost falls immediately after catching sight of a "scolding" squirrel. The day eventually turns sad, partly because he forgets that it is his birthday by one calendar and the day of Pushkin's death (of which he talked to his Russian class earlier that day) by the other (see note 67.3), partly because of the melancholy memories triggered by an insipid Soviet newsreel. And on a different plane, Pnin ignores Mrs. Thayer's broad hint about Isabel's imminent return and consequently suffers an additional shock at the very end of "Pnin's Day" (as the chapter was called in the *New Yorker*) when she does come, at the peak of his anguish. In Chapter Four the squirrel appears on a picture card Pnin sends to Victor along with the word's etymology (shadow-tail in Greek; Pnin embarks on the derivation of the Russian for squirrel, *belka*, in Chapter Six, inspired by a casual remark about the bowl, *Victor's gift*). Later Pnin grossly misjudges Victor's intelligence and buys the boy wrong presents. Right after Pnin has got secretly rid of one of them (the soccer ball), he falls and injures his back.[38]

* See my n. 158.12.

In Chapter Five, an invisible squirrel leaps from tree to tree above the spot in the woods where Pnin is hopelessly lost, and immediately afterwards he finds the way out. However, the day ends sorrow-shot as a casual talk revives the image of his murdered love, Mira Belochkin.[39] Gloom seems to overwhelm him all of a sudden; but the reader ought to do what Pnin did not and could not do: string together the brief visions of the past associated with Mira, which are scattered across the chapter and which lead up to its heart-rending finale. In the next chapter, we see Pnin in one of his gayest moods ever. His "successful" party is in full swing, and he discusses at great length etymological arcana of the French terms *verre* and *vair* (glass turned to miniver, or perhaps squirrel, fur). But in the last two sections of the chapter he plunges again into deepest desperation after Hagen informs Pnin that he stands to lose his job, and he all but shatters the precious bowl to boot. And, finally, in the last chapter N— remembers having glimpsed a stuffed squirrel in Pnin's room in his St. Petersburg flat, forty four years earlier. Did Pnin have one squirrel on his bed-side screen and another stuffed? Could it be yet another uncanny variant reading in the scenario of Pnin's life unfolded in the first six chapters and disputed in the last? Be that as it may, this taxidermic image is a perfect reification of the mobile emblem, as if the "shadow-tail" which had been pursuing Pnin through the book in the end jumped on a shelf and in a trice stiffened into a lifeless, though life-like, toy.

The presence of an involute thematic design, concealed from the hero (who is part of it), is evident to the re-reader; but does its meaning extend outside its immediate province, outside its trail, which winds through seven chapters? In other words, does the Squirrel Theme have a special allegoric mission, besides sharing in the general symbolism of all artistic expression? Not in a Nabokov novel. However persistently such images may recur they need carry "no burden of meaning whatsoever other than the fact that someone beyond the work is repeating them, that they are all part of one master pattern."[40] *Pnin*'s cosmos, however, is unique in that it consists of *two* "master patterns," one inside the other, and to solve its "perfect nonplus" requires putting brackets around N—'s subsidiary design, to separate it from Nabokov's embracing one.

2.

It can be said that there are two main types of novel configuration. One is a *concentric* composition grown around a protagonist (or his nest) and leading him through a series of external or inner evolutions; the other, an *eccentric* novel, which simultaneously uncoils adjacent and often interacting destinies of several major heroes. *Great Expectations*, *Ulysses*, and *Pnin* would be then examples of the first variety, while Tolstoy's

novels belong to the second, rarer, category. Of course, either type can adopt either of the two narrative modes, that is, the first or the third person narration, although one may argue that an eccentric novel cannot employ the former in its pure form.[41] *Pnin*, like *The Gift* before it, ingeniously combines both, for the presence in it of the the first person narrator is established through a long series of gradually accumulating interpolations and hints dropped here and there, which become more frequent and persistent toward the end. Then, in the last chapter, the figure which the first time customer initially took for a salesmannequin not only comes to life but takes over the rest—and, retroactively, the past—of the novel, thus radically shifting narrative perspective. Each chapter in *Pnin* follows the same compositional plan which, on a larger scale, is also a paradigm for the entire book. This plan is akin to the classical tragedy development from prostasis (Chapter One: the hero is introduced) to catastasis (Chapters Two to Five, bearing the main thematic complex) to catastrophe (which happens in Chapter Six) and to the novel's resolution in a catharsis beginning at the very end of Chapter Six (the punch-bowl recovered, the emotional balance regained) and lingering around and beyond the end of the book as Pnin rids himself of the nets of biased narration.[42]

If we adopt for the moment this purely formal and more or less casual analogy and for convenience's sake let the book run a little further along the dramatic lines, then we can view each chapter as a carefully staged act, the opening and closing chapters serving as the prologue and cathartic finale, dovetailed. Chapters Two through Six adhere, with varying degrees of strictness, to the classical principles of unity of place (except for the central Chapter Four which is set in St. Bart's and Waindell), time (with the exception of Chapter Two in which the first four sections are separated from the rest by two months), and certainly of action. Each follows a similar pattern of development. At the beginning the reader finds Pnin satisfied, serene, almost sanguine, totally and blissfully unaware of impending doom, ignoring its numerous signs. Later, as the chapter progresses and the clouds gather, he invariably faces some unforeseen misfortune which usually occurs close to, *but not quite at*, the end of a chapter. Finally, there comes an ebb, a relief, a coasting to the chapter's exit, which is sometimes accompanied by a little farewell jolt, a possibility of a crowning insult, as in Chapter Three and, perhaps, in Chapter One. It may seem that it is precisely Pnin's unclouded and unsuspecting serenity that makes him ripe for the ensuing mishap, as if his relative happiness were the cause of the contretemps. Thus, in the opening chapter Pnin is "quite satisfied" with himself while riding on the wrong train. His mistake eventually leads to a relapse of his queer heart condition and to a series of important reminiscences. Incidentally, this subtle technical manoeuver, achieved by means of several very smooth consecutive transitions, serves up the first installment of Pnin's biography without resorting to an awkward traditional digression.

In Chapter Two, Pnin cheerfully moves to the Clementses' house; successfully replaces all his teeth; establishes pleasant relations with Laurence and Joan whom he finds congenial—and then plumbs the bottom of anguish caused by his former wife's brief and grotesquely marble-hearted visit. A year later, Pnin disregards all the warning and reminding signals the narrator has dapped across the length of Chapter Three, and therefore fails to single out that special day from his academic routine. He teaches his Russian class that day, discussing Pushkin's death, and continues with his research on Russian history in the library, until a sense of inexplicable sadness sets in, growing acute after the memory-raking show of ludicrous Soviet films he attends that night. At the very end of the chapter he learns, too late, that he will have to leave the house that he has grown to like so much.

Pnin reappears in the second part of Chapter Four, where the reader sees him imperturbably shopping for a present for Victor who is supposed to arrive that day. But Victor does not come until the following day, and the carefully chosen gifts prove to be a failure, and on top of all this Pnin falls down the stairs and seriously injures his back.

In the next chapter, Pnin again prefers to ignore ominous signs which N— gives him in advance (the soft pressure of persistent wind, the attendant strangely resembling Hagen, the memorable pines, certain poignantly familiar routes that his memories would take during the day). He is in very good spirits when he arrives at The Pines: Pnin chats with Chateau, Pnin swims in the river, Pnin engagingly lectures on Tolstoy at dinner, Pnin beats everybody at croquet, Pnin is buoyant and winsome. But his cheerfulness fizzles out as the day wanes, until it gives way to yet another bizarre spell of his, followed by keen melancholy at a casual mention of his dead love and the piercing recollections it has set in motion.

In the "cliff-hanger" sixth chapter the reader learns from the outset that Pnin has no future at Waindell, but he himself has not even a nebulous idea about his precarious situation and throws what he thinks is a most successful party. (Actually, the evening is marred by a singular incompatibility of his guests [recorded in Roy Thayer's poem], by Laurence's barely concealed boredom, by the pettiness of Betty and Mrs. Thayer, by Hagen's vulgarity, and not least, by the "wrong guest of honor," Professor Thomas, whom Pnin mistakes for Professor Thomas Wynn.) During the party Pnin is as happy as he has ever been in the novel; but in the next to last section of the chapter the well-meaning but thick-rinded Hagen tells him (in a farcically cruel way which reminds the reader, more than it does Pnin, of Eric Wind and of the episode on the deck of the transatlantic boat in Chapter Two) that he will be given the sack. However, the ultimate blow which seems inevitable does not quite come off. The punch-bowl, Victor's gift, remains intact, against all odds and contrary to Pnin's and the reader's surety. Pnin does not die of a heart attack (see Section One, above). In fact, the *New Yorker* version, which lacks the all-

resolving Chapter Seven, ends on a soothing philosophical note:

> ...he felt that "losing one's job" dwindled to a meaningless echo in the rich, round inner world where none could really hurt him.

As a corollary, sections six through thirteen of this chapter form a little drama of their own, complete with all the necessary structural elements and the usual evolution from a gay mood to an inexorable despair. N— even provides some stage directions at the beginning of section ten and especially twelve.

The synoptic and expository part of the novel comes to a close when Pnin recovers the glass bowl and his presence of mind in the last section of Chapter Six. The reader sees Pnin for the last time sitting at the table in his kitchen and grappling, significantly, with the word "recapitulation."[43] Indeed, Chapter Seven does recapitulate and mark off the whole story; here, most of the novel's stringcourse themes flit by for the last time before being dismissed.[44] Chapter Seven scans Pnin's life, hastily stippling the blank patches and abruptly shifting the focal and *subjective* points of narration, so that N— becomes both the subject and the looming object of the ongoing epilogue. Pnin succeeds in dodging his friend N—, but the very last sentence detours the reader back to the beginning of the book, urging him to reread the whole story at a new and closer range and, *at the same time*, from a loftier observation point which could afford a view of the entire plan.[45]

3.

There are certainly more sound ways than one to describe *Pnin*'s thematic import. A rather obvious one would be "a gradual, visionary restoration of the past." In Nabokov's theory of Time, refined in every one of his subsequent novels and explained at length in Van Veen's tract *The Texture of Time* (Part Four of *Ada*), there is and can be no conceivable future (if only because, in order not to be an absurd convention, it would have to circumvent the present tense predicate in its definition, which is impossible), while one can assume the present as a running logical reference point which, when stopped for any reason or by any means whatever, vanishes at once, gobbled by the past. But the past itself is given to us only as a rememoration, that is, only in the present of that recollection. Surely if, by definition, the "future" is a self-annihilative notion, if the present is an ephemeral figure of thought, and if the past as such must be ever-rising, but "at the same time" forever receding, then one ought to admit that time is but a powerful paradigm of mind outside of which mind can retain its sanity no more than a compass its purpose at the pole. The idea of the continuous sequence of sequential phenomena is not

merely, and perhaps exclusively, human; it is the very element of consciousness, its mode of existence. An attempt to extricate a separate notion of "Time" from this idea should be considered a poetic, not philosophical, endeavor, like the notion of the horizon. There is no independent definition of a straight line or, more basically, of a mathematical point, yet both are, purely poetically, postulated for essential mathematical operations, both can be precisely located and coordinated. Just as much, the irreversible ebbing of time is an illusory but extremely ingenious and convenient metaphor which informs man's consciousness and which he then religiously bestows onto the worlds he creates. The fact that Nabokov makes his best-thinking characters formulate these principles, while he himself witholds the judgment, or even distances himself from them in public statements,[46] only underscores the supreme governance of the familiar illusion of time passage in serious fiction. At the highest artistic level, a novel ought to aspire to be ontologically congruent; therefore, its personae cannot travel in time at will, they ought not to be able to retrace their steps, nor to know their fate in advance—just as *we* cannot change this strange condition, time, which works only when not grasped. But time becomes perfectly docile when viewed from outside, from an extremely advantageous and exciting position Nabokov has reserved for the intelligent re-reader: the position beside himself. The reader is infinitely above and beyond all temporal constraints of the heroes, he knows their "future" as well as their "past," and so he can enjoy the master plan panoramically or in minute detail, stalking up and down its labyrinthine paths and finding more treasures with each reading. "Nabokov always envisages that mortal memory might be the forerunner of a consciousness to which the past might be directly accessible, open for the kind of endless reinvestigation which could lead to the discovery of the watermarks of time. Because as readers we can continue to re-examine the fictive past, Nabokov can offer us the shiver and thrill of discovering in the novel's events harmonies as unexpected as the "morning" pattern [of Van and Ada's mornings together prior to the crucial one at the Trois Cygnes, at the end of the Texture of Time part. G.B.]. In allowing such shockingly unforeseen pleasure and new insight into familiar events, Nabokov makes almost unbearably delightful the prospect of an immortality in which such discoveries would be rife" (*Boyd*, p.186).

Thus the re-reader is afforded yet another exquisite pleasure: he can check the accuracy of a character's memory and study its aberrations. Which is, of course, one of *Pnin*'s capital and most problematic themes.

Even the strongest memory, that peculiar channel to the past, loses much of its vividness when exposed, as if our light veiled and blurred the preserved images previously viewed only in the darkroom of one's solitary recollection. The moment one's private memory becomes public property, it cuts somehow its natural fragile capillary vasculature connecting it with

the prototype through a series of intermediate refueling reminiscences. Opening the critical episode in the last chapter, which I will presently analyse, N— implicitly reckons with precisely this danger when he admits that if he has "reconstructed in some detail the precedent impressions" of Pnin it is not because he remembers them but because he remembers his remembering those impressions at a Paris café in the early twenties and wants now "to fix what flashed through" his mind then (179). Put to words, be it the best words musterable, a remembrance loses to art its scintillation, and with it, its pass to the past.[47] Thus its reliability becomes questionable as soon and inasmuch as it is materialized.

In Chapter Six, after the party at Pnin's house, Roy Thayer, a closet poet, jots down, in his diary in verse, these lines:

> We sat and drank, each with a separate past
> Locked up in him, and fate's alarm clocks set
> At unrelated futures...

Once the past is unlocked, its very authenticity becomes doubtful, so perishable an article is time. In the seventh chapter, N— recalls his previous encounters with Pnin, the object of his six-episode narration. He revives, in minute and fascinating detail, the first time he saw him as a schoolboy in St.Petersburg; then, as a vacationing student on N—'s grandaunt's Baltic estate; and later, in emigration, several times in Paris and New York. Once, in Paris, N— endeavored "to amuse [Pnin] and other people around [them] with the unusual lucidity and strength" of his memory by recounting the first two anecdotes, "A Visit to Dr. Pnin" and "The *Liebelei*." However, much to N—'s surprise, Pnin "denied everything" and insisted that they had never seen each other before (pp.179-80).

Here we face, needless to say, a dilemma of cardinal urgency for the whole novel's aetiology: Was N—'s astonishment feigned, that is, did he make up the episodes? or did Pnin gainsay their authenticity simply out of spite and because he was "reluctant [...] to recognize his own past" (180)? Apparently, either alternative will conflict with evidence which obtains in the text. For, indeed, if N— were merely an "uzhasnïy vïdumshchik" (185) who concocted those stories out of vanity, to flaunt his awesome memory, why would he do it in front of the very hero of the fabrication who could instantly and successfully refute it and call the inventor's bluff? Why would N— risk a public embarrassment if he was not convinced in his memory's accuracy? While relating his first encounter with Pnin, N—wonders: "Do I really remember his crew cut, his puffy pale face, his red ears?" and answers without hesitation, "Yes, distinctly." (176). Is it just a rhetorical quirk? Moreover, in section four of that chapter, it is Pnin who seems to have retouched the past when, in a sudden volley, he shouts across the table to Barakan engaged in a conversation with N—: "Now, don't believe a word

he says, Georgiy Aramovich. He makes up everything. He once invented that we were schoolmates in Russia and cribbed at examinations. He is a dreadful inventor." (185). The situation is the more extraordinary that Barakan (another pre-marital paramour of Liza's, one of several Georges she befriends in the novel) was present at the rencontre in the Paris café, to which Pnin apparently is referring and during which N— said nothing of the sort—in fact, he pointed out that he had gone to a "more liberal school."

On the other hand, if N—'s stories were true, why then should Pnin have denied them? After all, there is nothing especially uncomfortable, let alone insulting, in N—'s version of Pnin's past, not in that A-plus in the Algebra scene, nor even in the Schnitzler episode—after all, their Paris confrontation takes place *before* N—'s entanglement with Liza, Pnin's future wife, and thus any possible connection between Pnin's role in the play (of the betrayed husband, according to N—) and his disastrous marriage can be set, within the novel, only retroactively. Besides, one will notice that Pnin does not merely deny N—'s story flat; he counters three specific items with his own, also very specific, memories: He maintains that he had poor marks in algebra in school; that his father would never present him to his patients; and that he had a different part in *Liebelei* (of the violinist). And, of course, his most striking assertion remains that he had never met N— before. As for the strength of *Pnin's* memory, N— not only never puts it to doubt but himself displays and stresses in every chapter its amazing clarity.[48]

Again, it is obvious that the question of N—'s faithworthiness and, therefore, his probity is of utmost importance for the novel's understanding. After all, if Pnin is right in this collision, then the whole story of his life, the entire length of the book about him, should be regarded with suspicion. Should it really?

Practically every one of *Pnin*'s critics—Gordon, Nicol, Carroll, Grams, Connolly—picks up the hot potato of the narrator's reliability issue. I have no intention of entering here the misguided debate concerning N—'s snobbish and itching desire to point out and set off, at every step, even to the detriment of truth, his social ("a more sumptuous childhood" etc.) and intellectual superiority over Pnin. Suffice it to say that, with regard to the former, it was absolutely unthinkable for a man of Pnin's and N—'s ken (true Russian intelligentsia) to set any stock by class or wealth, especially in exile. As to N—'s intellectual advantage, it is evident only in his command of the English language and in his being keenly sensitive to detail (while Pnin is famously unobservant)—which are precisely the two faculties that make N— a writer and enable him to compose a book about Pnin.

Yet the problem remains that N—'s hero and friend refuses to accept N—'s version of his life. And upon closer examination it does betray many interesting oddities. Let us take, for example, the Baltic resort episode

which shows more discordancy than N— chooses to reveal in the Paris café section of Chapter Seven. In the "synoptic" chapters, N— touches upon this topic twice, in Chapter One and in Chapter Five. In the first, Pnin sees, in a flash of a mild hallucinatory spell, "one of his Baltic aunts, wearing the pearls and the lace and the blond wig she had worn at all the performances given by the great ham actor Khodotov, whom she had adored from afar before drifting into insanity." (27). At the outset of Chapter Five, however, N— outlines Pnin's furtive, interrupted association, a whiff of "a dim dead day when he, a Petrograd University freshman, had arrived at the small station of a Baltic summer resort..." (114) which, at the end of the chapter, leads to one of his rueful and discomforting recollection swoons. Here we learn that "the Belochkins rented [a country house] that summer [i.e., 1916] in the same Baltic resort near which the widow of General N— let a summer cottage to the Pnins on the confines of her vast estate, marshy and rugged, with dark woods hemming a desolate manor." (133). One would think that this widow was none other than "one of Pnin's Baltic aunts" of the Chapter One memory; but no, in the last chapter she is said to be the *narrator's* "dreary old aunt," whom he and his family visited "at her curiously desolate country seat not far from a famous resort on the Baltic coast." (177). And Pnin "vaguely recalled" this grandaunt (180), thus not denying this fact. As if this bizarre appropriation of the Baltic aunt were not enough, N— apparently gives her, in Chapter Seven, a different "great ham actor" to adore, namely Ancharov, a "provincial semiprofessional actor" (178).[49] What is even more astounding, the nonchalant fellow at the rail-road station in Whitchurch, Bob Horn, whose pregnant wife's false labors set in motion events which led to Pnin's first seizure in the series (17-25), suddenly turns into the steward of N—'s aunt's estate, Robert Horn, a "cheerful plump person from Riga [...] who kept applauding heartily at the wrong moments." (178).

We can now tabulate major discrepancies between the two versions of the episode (pretending for the moment that Pnin has his own independent version of his life which N— faithfully relates in Chapters One through Six).

"SYNOPTIC" (Pnin's)

Pnin's Baltic aunt
Khodotov, "great ham actor"
Bob Horn, an "employee"

CHAPTER SEVEN (N—'s)

N—'s Baltic aunt
Ancharov, "provincial semiprofessional actor"
Robert Horn, a "steward"

We also should not forget that, *within Chapter Seven*, Pnin claims that he neither played the role of the cuckolded husband, nor met N— that summer (or before).

But the concluding chapter casts a much more disturbing light on the rest of the novel. Without it, the reader—let us say, the *New Yorker*'s reader—accepts the narrator's omniscience by the strange clause of the traditional literary contract extending the privileges of the third person narrator to the first person. However, when that narrator himself delimits his knowledge of his subject-matter quite strictly, as N— does in the last chapter, the reader is bound to marvel. Of course, N— could have easily collected various tidbits of his hero's life at Waindell from Hagen, from the Clementses, from the Thayers, and, above all, from Jack Cockerell; certainly, many of The Pines' regular Russians summer guests (Chateau, Roza Shpolyanski, Bolotov) could purvey the raw material about the summer of 1954; and not too cumbersome research could turn up information necessary for writing the second half of Chapter Two (Pnin's marriage, voyage to the U.S., and Liza's visit) and even Chapter Four (Victor Wind). A "prominent Anglo-Russian writer" (140), N— could have then summoned his powerful imagination to caulk all the remaining gaps and crevices, supply the missing links, change the names, etc.[50] The resulting book, *My Poor Pnin*, would have then had a logical task-pattern akin to what chess problemists call retrograde analysis: a move by move restoration of the initial position, which involves meticulous investigation of various thematic possibilities: surprise ("weak") promotions, takes *en passant*, lost castling privileges, plausible interplay and counterplay, and so forth.[51] In such a design, the last chapter would have been a logical departure point: Pnin leaves Waindell, N— settles in it and decides to write about Pnin's adventures. A mechanism of this very sort (but set in a true chess environment) works quite smoothly in V.'s biography of his half-brother Sebastian Knight: V. begins the book after Knight's death and leads the narration up to that starting point—at which point the book comes to an end.

But *Pnin* is a different, more complex, cosmos. Its straightforwardness is ruthlessly deceptive; its light is phosphorescent and flickering; long bottomless cracks of suspiciously seismic-looking origin traverse its paved surface. Perhaps the plainest way to sense this strangeness and singularity of *Pnin* is to imagine that at the end of *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* the reader learns that Clare Bishop gave birth to a brace of healthy twins; that Knight's French valet's name is Palechin; and that V. first met his half-brother only in 1922, in Paris. The taut and durable film of causality wrapping the narration would be then slashed in three places, and widening scissures would run in all directions, revealing new strange vistas beneath. Careful shifts, faint tremors and minuscule rearrangements, which in the first half of *Pnin* chiefly take shape of infrequent narrator's obtrusions, wax persistent and clearly visible in Chapter Five (Pnin and

Chateau talking of N—) and Six (the Twin Theme: "Pnin and I had long since accepted....," 148), and the quake of Chapter Seven shatters not only certain previously established routes but, by many intertunneled implications, changes the entire topography of the novel. Having read the novel even once, the intelligent reader will never be able to re-read, for instance, the "dissolve" scenes (when Pnin sinks to his past through the thin marshy surface of the novel's "present") with quite the same yes-of-course attitude. It is one thing to be aware that the narrator uses these spells, which he himself induces on Pnin, to supply biographical data about his hero, as he does in odd chapters (One, Three, and Five), while resorting to regular "objective" pluperfect forays into the past in even; and it is a vastly different experience to keep in mind, while rereading such pages, that

1. The narrator has implicitly admitted, by roping off the extent of his knowledge, that he could not but make up these episodes (Pnin's childhood in Chapter One or his love for Mira Belochkin in Five; or his parents, *passim* in odd chapters);

2. His hero questions even those episodes which seem to issue straight from the narrator's memory, not imagination, and resents N—'s tampering with his past;

3. The narrator may be an unpleasant fellow, a haughty snob, and a cold, unsparing, "evil designer" (23).

4. He is aware of the reader's suspicions and stirs them into his scheme.

Indeed, he has left many unmistakable traces of his presence and strong, arbitrary rule well before the last chapter: in asides such as "for the nonce, I am his physician" (20; sending Pnin into his first rememorative cantrip); "I do not think he loved anybody" (87; of Victor Wind); "O, Careless Reader!" (75; pushing the careful toward an easy solution of Chapter Three problem, which turns out to be flawed, however—see *IN-II* and notes 67.3 and 75.15-17), and many others,—and in the thematic orchestration of the story.

Several times in the course of the book N— shows how Pnin, usually on the brink of utter distress, comes very close to solving the universal riddle but when he reaches to grasp "the key of the pattern" (23) concealed by "the evil designer [...] with such monstrous care" (*id.*) it turns, let's say, to a squirrel (24, 58) or a row of wind-ruffled rhododendrons (24), both of which, far from confusing "whatever rational pattern Timofey Pnin's surroundings had once had" (*id.*), procure obligingly the very pattern Pnin seeks (both images come from his St. Petersburg flat; both recur, in disguise, at crucial jointures). Pnin holds the key, nurses it abstractly, then drops it with a perplexed shrug because one cannot see the pattern if one is part of it.

Nabokov speaks precisely of this kind of key in one of his lectures on Proust:

> *In Search of Lost Time* is an evocation, not a description of the past [...] This evocation [...] is made possible by bringing to light a number of exquisitely chosen moments which are a sequence of illustrations or images ... The key to the problem of reestablishing the past turns out to be the key of art.[52]

I have embarked on this lengthy digression with a view to demonstrating how intrinsically different *Pnin*'s world is from apparently similar literary structures. Now back to our dilemma. On a first reading, one ought to wonder whether N— distorts Pnin's past or Pnin refuses to recognize it under an artist's pen. Discoursive fairness demands that I at least mention the general point behind any such dilemma, although established Nabokov readers will find it redundant: is one's past restorable, even under the best of pens? Nabokov has minted numerous memorable formulae of an answer to this question which vary in form but have remained astonishingly unchanged in matter over the long span of his artistic activity. Since his later remarks of this sort are well known, I should like to quote from his relatively seldom mentioned French speech on Pushkin, "*Pouchkine ou le vrai et le vraisemblable*" (1937).[53] Here are the excerpts that, I think, reflect light on N—'s creative methods:

> Is it possible to imagine the full reality of another's life, to relive it in one's mind and set it down intact on paper? I doubt it: one even finds oneself seduced by the idea that *thought itself, as it shines its beam on the story of a man's life, cannot avoid deforming it. Thus, what our mind perceives turns out to be plausible, but not true* [...] After all, what does it matter if what we perceive is but a monstrous hoax? Let us be honest and admit that if our mind could reverse direction and worm its way into Pushkin's age, we would not recognize it. What is the difference! The joy that we derive is one that the bitterest criticism, including that which I direct at myself, cannot destroy.[54]

In the next several paragraphs Nabokov produces a fleeting series of Pushkin vicars who trot across the stage, smiling, stamping, some even on horseback, and then interrupts the show to admit:

> I am quite aware that this is not the real Pushkin, but a third-rate thespian whom I pay to play the part. What is the difference! The ruse amuses me, and I catch myself beginning to believe in it [...] These images are probably false, and the *true Pushkin would not recognize himself in them.* Yet if I inject into them a bit of the same love that I feel when reading his poems, is not what I am doing with this imaginary life somehow akin to the poet's work, if not to the poet himself?[55]

The theme of the anaclastic past envelops *Pnin*, but within the novel it seems impossible to point out the source, or measure the extent, of the distortion. Adding a further complicating twist to the main antimony (N—'s thesis against Pnin's antithesis), there lurks a figure of Jack Cockerell, that minor narrator of Pnin's anecdotes of which the reader learns quite a

number in Chapter Seven. Some of them are completely new, others are sequels to episodes already known to the reader, but since still others contradict N—'s versions of the same events (so that in one instance N— even finds himself obliged to issue a parenthetical discredit[56]), they all look extremely suspicious: at best, these stories seem to be crude exaggerations; at worst, clever fabrications. The reader should not lose sight of the reverse causality here: although Cockerell's renditions of the events, which as often as not ill fit their previously related versions, come at the very end of the book, it is N— who has combed, padded and otherwise edited them before distributing the anecdotes among the chapters which compositionally precede Chapter Seven but logically depart, and to a degree derive, from it.

However, Jack Cockerell's "deliciously funny" (188) Pnin impersonation program leaves N— "with the mental counterpart of a bad taste in the mouth" (189) and has the first-time reader thoroughly baffled. Pnin moves into the book on the wrong train and out of it in a wretched car, but the final—Cockerell's—sentence takes the reader back on the wrong train, in more senses than one. Could Cockerell have made up the Cremona episode or, rather, deformed it for more effect, just as he has farcically exaggerated Pnin's gestures and slips of the tongue? Or, perhaps, N— spared his hero the ultimate disaster at the lectern, changed the end of Cockerell's story (his proclaimed aversion to happy-ending notwithstanding) and "stuffed [Pnin's] coat" with all *three* typescripts "so as to have the one he wanted among the rest (thus thwarting mischance by mathematical necessity)" (26)?

Let me repeat that the novel itself cannot answer any of these questions *in principle*. One should keep in mind that N— himself is but a character in *Pnin*, a prominent character, to be sure, but an element in the master design all the same. Being part of this design, he cannot see it—although he may suspect, or *believe* in, its existence. His notion of the universe in which he dwells and moves need not, philosophically, have an apriori advantage over that of another personage, Pnin, his compatriot and book-mate. Yes, N— has composed a wonderful book about Pnin (*My Poor Pnin*, the first six chapters), but the reader of Chapter Seven receives a queer impression that, as Cockerell's Pniniana grows stale and excessively bombastic, Pnin's familiar image, ideally bald and artificially tanned, in turn amusing and pathetic, becomes blurred, becomes dim, moves into the shadow of the *un*familiar, unknown, from which he seemed to have emerged in the first sentence of the first chapter. Here, in the last one, the reader, prodded by N—'s wand, begins to doubt the knowledge he has gained so far, because its source is now doubtful. The grotesque Clown of Cockerell's travesty countervails the fleeing King of Victor's fancy, and both these images are equidistant from the plausible Pnin we have come to recognize.[57] Not any more. At the end of the novel his face becomes vaporous, his character little known. In fact, doubly so, for the story of Chapter Seven, the very information that sheds such an uncertain,

alienating light on the previous narrative, may be also suspect since it is N— who recounts that story, it is N— who slips in that information. In trying to come to a sensible conclusion about Pnin's conflicting versions, the serious first-time reader finds himself at the book's end in a thoroughly enclosed, logically inescapable condition which Pyrrhonians called *epochē* suspension of judgment, because either side of the story, N—'s or "Pnin's," if accepted, would contradict *itself*, yet the two versions cannot be reconciled. Can't they really? The only way to break free from the implacable *epochē* is to reopen the book and reread it from a loftier point.

4.

One of Lewis Carroll's curious logical problems can be formulated thus:

> Suppose, **q** implies (or "includes," if it is a category) **r**; but **p** implies that **q** implies **non-r**; what can one infer from this?[58]

Pavel Florenski, who treats this problem at length in one of the appendices to his monumental theological work,[59] interprets this problem in more descriptive terms: the veracity of a judgment **r** necessarily issues from the veracity of another judgment **q**; but a third judgment **p** is such that from its veracity it follows with necessity that from **q** issues not **r**, as it was posited above, but rather its negation, **non-r**. What can one conclude from such a combination of premises?[60]

Florenski further notes that this problem is not an artificial riddle invented to amuse and flex the specially inclined mind. Far from being invented, it serves a real, essential need and formally illustrates one of the most profound thoughts ever conceived, namely, that the ultimate Truth must needs be antinomic. Curiously, Carroll makes the same mistake in his theoretical solution of the problem as most people do when they confront it in life. He reasons that if **q** implies **r,** then it cannot imply **non-r**; therefore, **p** implies the impossible, ergo, it is false. But Carroll's conclusion is erroneous because it is possible that not **p** but **q** is false implying as it may at once **r** and **non-r**, i.e. two mutually contradictory judgments, and Florenski proceeds to prove it beyond dispute using the symbols and transformations of formal logic, which we shall omit here. His inference thus obtained is that the truthfulness of **p** leads to the negation of **q,** or, in other words, that "*one cannot assert* **q** inasmuch as, or in the case that, or when, where, and howsoever, **p** is present."[61] Which does not mean, despite Carroll, that **p** is absurd, or that **q** is absurd (since it contains a contradictory effect). It means, instead, that neither judgment is absurd, and both may be true, but *one cannot be asserted in the presence of the other*. If **p** is present, then **q** is

void; in all other conditions **q** is valid. Florenski translates the abstractions of his logical solution first into a simple example, then into a more complex one, closer to his concerns—and ours.

Example I: The sky is blue; but it is crimson at sunset. What can be inferred from this? Here "the sky" is **q**; "blue"—**r**; "at sunset"—**p**; and "crimson" (="non-blue")—**non-r**, which thus proves to be a case of the Carroll Paradox. If one follows the careless common logic, then one will have to conclude that either **p** is nonsensical, i.e., there can be no sunset, whose very notion is inadmissible, or that **q** is absurd, i.e., the concept of the "sky" is internally contradictory and thus there is no such thing. The actual answer is, of course, that although both "sunset" and "sky" are quite possible, *at sunset* one observes something else, a "non-sky" (say, the sun seen through the atmospheric layers, through "the sky").

Example II: A rationalist asserts that the contradictions found in the Scriptures and Christian dogmata prove their non-divine origin. A mystic, on the other hand, suggests that in the state of spiritual illumination it is precisely those contradictions that prove the divinity of the Scriptures and the dogmata. Query: what can one conclude from these hypotheticals?

Again, "contradictions = **q**"; "non-divine origin" = **r**; "the state of spiritual illumination" = **p**; and "divinity of the Scriptures" = **non-r** (its negation).

Common sense, says Florenski, dictates the inference that either **p** or **q** is nonsense, i.e., that either "spiritual illumination" is impossible or it is absurd to talk about "the Scriptural or doctrinal contradictions." In the first case, the mystic's premise would be meaningless; in the second, both his and the rationalist's judgments would be such. Actually, they are both correct, and there is nothing absurd about either notion: if both the mystic and the rationalist are trustworthy, which one should assume, then there are indeed "contradictions in the Scriptures and dogmata," just as there can be a state of "spiritual illumination." But what is contradiction to *ratio*, ceases to be one at a higher elevation of spiritual gnosis. Contradictions definitely are there, but they turn, as Florenski concludes his essay, to a "supreme synthesis in the light of the Sun that never sets, and then it is exactly [those incongruities] that demonstrate that the Holy Scriptures and dogmata are above mundane reasoning and thus could not be invented by man, ergo, they are divine."[62]

Let us now see whether we could not apply this algorithm to extricate ourselves from the *epochē* trap in *Pnin*. We can take any pair of N—'s or Pnin's mutually exclusive statements and syllogize them according to Lewis Carroll's scheme. For example, in the very important Paris café episode Pnin maintains that he has never seen N— before; that is, he has met him for the first time in 192—, while N— maintains that they have met twice before, in 1911 and again in 1916. "How should we diagnose this case?" (as N— puts it in a different connection—p.13). In terms of Carroll's problem, "Pnin has met N—" = **q**; "in 192—" = **r**; "prior to 192—" (= "*not*

in 192—") = **non-r**. We assume that neither is lying.* But what is the special condition **p** which sets the mechanism in motion? It is Pnin's being a character in N—'s book, something that Pnin cannot grasp ("the key to the pattern"). Therefore, one can say that Pnin has not seen N— until the early twenties, *unless* he is the hero of *My Poor Pnin*, in which case he *has* seen N— twice prior to the Parisian episode in the early twenties.

But the same radical logic can be applied to the sum of their statements, i.e. to the entire version of Pnin as it is presented by N— and rejected by Pnin. The conclusion—which only seems paradoxical—will be, then, that N— and Pnin *cannot coexist:* if and where there is N—, there should be no Pnin, and vice versa.[63] One pushes the other out, and Pnin ultimately flees the novel when N— arrives there in person, thus reversing Carroll's original mind-twister, "if Allen is in, Carr is out."** From within N—'s story this cannot be explained satisfactorily. Why should Pnin refuse to stay at Waindell in the new Russian division N— intends to set up? The answer seems obvious: because N— had been Liza's lover and because she had tried to take her life as a result of the affair, and even though it all had happened before her marriage to Pnin, and despite the fact that Pnin "had pardoned" N— some thirty years earlier (p.184), he still loves Liza and cannot overcome his squeamish dislike for N—. But this obvious answer is superficial and flawed, for it fails to explain why then Pnin, in an exigent dialogue at the end of Chapter Six, should confirm to Hagen that he and N— are friends (170), or why he should refuse even to see his "friend" however briefly and hastens to leave Waindell on his birthday, at the beginning of the semester. After all, he has seen him several times in the course of the past three decades, the last time some three years earlier, in New York.*** Florenski's formula gives a better explanation. Pnin dislikes and repels N— because N— is a "dreadful inventor" of what he vaguely perceives is a "non-Pnin." Pnin cannot know, but can sense, the condition **p** which denies him his freedom and his identity. *On the plane of the present* Pnin cannot be together with N—; this is why his image becomes vaguer as N— draws nearer, and disappears completely when N— enters the stage as agent. "As [N—] physically approaches," says Quentin Anderson in an excellent little essay, "Pnin must recede, because the narrator is precisely that element within whose ambience Pnin cannot exist."[64] When N—'s book about "poor Pnin" is finished, the reader does not really know Pnin. When N— lets the reader into the novel's "present" at the very end of Chapter Seven, all he sees is the door closing behind Pnin; Pnin "has gone, he has quite gone" (189). But since N— himself is merely a character in someone else's fantasy (the condition **p** of a higher

* I have tried to show in the previous section of this chapter that neither has a compelling reason to twist the facts they differ upon.

**The two all but portmanteau into their creator's pen name.

***See the scene on the bus, p. 186.

order), and since the reader, upon consequent readings, should not accompany N— anywhere but can have an aerial view of the labyrinth, the reader will be aware that there may indeed be another Pnin outside N—'s fiction. At that level all contradictions will cohere. On the novel's plane, they point to that higher modus of existence infinitely beyond the characters's comprehension.

5.

No human experimentation, empirical or theoretical, affords quite as excellent an opportunity to try one's strong inklings and vague beliefs as does a well executed novel. The recreated world is beautiful and congruent, its inhabitants are made after our likeness, and their maker is invisible to them but omnipresent. Speaking of *PF*, Boyd observes:

> Nabokov, like Shade, deliberately and pointedly impersontes fate. Like Shade he realizes that any power which could pattern human lives would have to be far beyond the human, beyond the fathoming of reason. But, he feels, imagination might be able to imitate this power and to create a "correlated pattern in the game," thereby, perhaps, sharing "something of the same pleasure in [the patterned game of life] as those who played it found." Nabokov's acting as fate is not merely the normal privilege of a novelist to invent his events: *in those novels where pattern in human lives is a major concern, his role is deliberately and specifically intrusive.*[65]

Pnin is precisely such a novel, with an additional and very significant complication of adding a figure of an imperious and impervious creator, a character who at first keeps on the periphery of the story and later rapidly moves inside it. "Nabokov's characters," says another critic, "are 'galley slaves' in that they know themselves subject to inhuman and autocratic powers."[66] But (to play with the other meaning of "galley") one's labor in life is analogous to a fictional character's labors set in composed type. Readers of *Pnin* could readily solve the riddle of Pnin's existence, the riddle that haunts him in every chapter and the access to which he is denied by his very nature. Pnin may have a strange but well-grounded sensation of being a victim of N—'s designs (especially in the first and the last chapters) but his credenda become haphazard when he reaches to what geometers call the *gnomon*, in our case, the outer range of the book, the infinitesimal but untraversable space that separates N—'s fiction from Nabokov's. Pnin does not believe that "people are reunited in Heaven" (58) and he happens to be right: the idea, attractive as it may be in Pnin's world, has no place outside it; he does not believe "in an autocratic God"; instead he does "believe, dimly, in a democracy of ghosts" (136), and the reader knows well that, inasmuch as Pnin is concerned, this is heresy.[67]

Wrong beliefs are relatively harmless; knowledge of the ultimate truth ought to be prodigiously shattering. The "autocratic deity" of *Bend*

Sinister grants Adam Krug that knowledge at the cost of his sanity. Granted to Adam Falter (in "Ultima Thule"), it renders his reason inapplicable to everyday life.[68] One can safely *believe* in the beyondness but *knowing* it is a self-dissolving idea because such an experience must annihilate the concept of knowledge, indeed the very concept of a concept. This is why Van Veen, a psychologist exploring the hearsays of the hereafter, notes that "the confusion of two realities, one in single, the other in double, quotes, was a symptom of impending insanity."[69] An invisible but caring hand invariably stops Pnin on the mete of the dangerous discovery. If it didn't, the hero would have to be removed, as Adam Krug was, lest the novel's shell should crack owing to serious ontological disconformity. It is this ultimate designer's dexter hand, and not N—'s sinister, that holds the strings and monocratically manipulates his creatures and provides for them.

It seems, by the way, that Nabokov had initially intended to carry the theme of Krug's return "onto his creator's bosom" farther than he actually did, judging by his remark in a letter to Wilson written in January of 1944: "Towards the end of the book [...] there will be the looming and development of an idea which has *never* been treated before."[70] One of Wilson's letters, exactly three years later, sheds reflected light on this abandoned plan: "I'm sorry that you gave up the idea of having your hero confront his maker."[71] Nabokov works a more elaborate application of this strategy into *Pnin* and he of course consciously unbraids the matter when he tells Covici, in the already quoted epitome of the book, that "at the end of the novel, I, V.N., arrive in person to Waindell College to lecture on Russian literature, while poor Pnin dies..." Actually, as the reader knows full well, V.N. is not and can never be N—, and "poor Pnin" does not, and really cannot, die.

"It is godlike to create; it is unbearably human, and inferior, to be the subject of someone else's creation," observes W. Carroll.[72] Yes, but merely to suspect the existence of a salubrious, all-arranging creative power beyond the bourn of the comprehensible, far from dispelling this feeling of inferiority, should ennoble it. "If our lives," says Boyd, "are patterned by a force beyond ourselves, that force would seem to create its patterns, as a good novelist does, through individual human freedom. The patterning of one's life not only need not diminish its human value, its value visible from within mortality, but it might also reveal a resplendent worth to the more than mortal gaze."[73]

Moreover, Nabokov's creatures enjoy several unique privileges. First, their author's legate is often among them in disguise, in effect sharing their predicament within the book's frame. One of those impersonating agents, writer Vadim Vadimych N., has, in fact, dreadful prophetic nightmares inflicted by his invisible but almighty maker:

> I now confess that I was bothered that night, and the next and some time before, by a dream feeling that my life was the non-identical twin, a parody, an inferior variant of another man's life, somewhere on this or another earth. A demon, I felt, was forcing me to impersonate that other man, that other writer who was and would always be incomparably greater, healthier, and crueler than your obedient servant.[74]

Second and foremost, some of the chosen Nabokov characters, especially the martyrs among them, those steered into the clutches of despair, are granted to glimpse the tailfin of the truth that Nabokov's reader is free to arrive at by a sheer intellectual effort: that in well-made worlds characters, *sub specie auctoris et lectoris* (a fixed, close, studious stare from impossible distances), are not mortal. In his introduction to *Bend Sinister*, Nabokov describes how in the last chapter of the book an "anthropomorphic deity" impersonated by him

> experiences a pang of pity for his creature and hastens to take over. Krug, in a sudden moonburst of madness, understands that he is in good hands: nothing really matters, there is nothing to fear, and death is but a question of style, a mere literary device, a musical resolution.[75]

The *New Yorker* version of *Pnin*, which avoids references to N— and lacks Chapter Seven, ends in an important paragraph (perfectly in place at the end of a preface but, for Nabokov, unusually candid to be a novel's last sentence) whose tonality much resembles that musical resolution. Here is this provisional finale which Nabokov ruthlessly cut out when, in the final version, he coupled Chapter Six to the last chapter: after Pnin had "rubbed dry" the miraculously recovered bowl "working the cloth very tenderly over the recurrent design of the docile glass" and placed it "on a high, safe shelf,"

> [. . .] the sense of security there communicated itself to his own state of mind, and he felt that "losing one's job" dwindled to a meaningless echo in the rich, round inner world where none could really hurt him.

Unlike Krug, Pnin may preserve his sanity because this sense of security is an undirected, scalar, quantity; he gains it gratis, without the mind-quaking realization that he is in good hands of an autocratic deity who oversees his well-being.

The voices of many critics who claim that *Pnin* is the "warmest," the "most approachable,"[76] the "most gentle and humane of all Nabokov's novels,"[77] join in a curiously large capella. A memoirist, who used to know Nabokov at Cornell in the 1950s, recounts this characteristic anecdote:

> At a crowded party, I found myself pushed up against him. Feeling the need to say something, an impulse I should have resisted, I told him that I had just read *Pnin*, which I had liked very much. He could have said "Thank you," but instead [he] asked, "Why?" I told him (and it was a truthful remark) that I liked it for the compassion I found within it. He abruptly turned away, as if I had slapped his face.[78]

Perhaps, this peculiar illusion of an unusual warmth and compassion can be better understood if one ponders an interesting fact that *Pnin* is Nabokov's *only* novel, Russian or English, in which nobody dies on or off stage, i.e., on the novel's surface (we thus shall disregard such *remembered* deaths as Mira's in Chapter Five).[79] Knowing Nabokov's principles and methods of composing novels, knowing of the clash between Nabokov and *The New Yorker*'s editors over their attempt to "edit" two of his short stories,[80] knowing, indeed, very specifically that "the design of *Pnin* was complete in [his] mind when [he] composed the first chapter,"[81] one finds it hard to believe that Nabokov could really change *anything* in that design, much less a matter of such enormous consequence as the main hero's life and death, to indulge an editor, even if she be a good friend,* or the reader who might be otherwise left with "a bitter rather than a pleasurable feeling."** Why should he feel embittered? Because, says the publisher (Covici), that *vox lectoris otiosi*, Pnin's "death, he being the hero, would give him an heroic semblance which to me would be false. It would be no catharsis to justify its cruelty." But Boyd may be right when he points out, in regard to "Signs and Symbols"—the story which *The New Yorker* tried to censure—that whereas the "pain of the story's world is real, it is far from being pointless or alotted in a spirit of cruelty; nothing could be gentler or more loving than this elaborate patterning of miseries [...] What is from within the story a pointless accumulation of grief is from outside its created world an exaltation of tenderness and love."[82]

If Nabokov did mean to remove Pnin toward the end in Krug-like fashion, he must have changed his mind due to the compositional exigencies I have discussed—although I am inclined to think that he was pulling both Mrs. White's and Pat Covici's legs in an effort not to divulge the true content of Chapter Seven designed to be the novel's "musical resolution" and the vehicle of its topmost idea which Nabokov had earlier intimated to Wilson in connection with *Bend Sinister*. The "cliff-hanger" Chapter Six's ending seems to be a temporary attraction set up to entertain the early birds while the main spectacle is being prepared behind the closed doors.

But whether Nabokov initially intended to do Pnin in or not, death in a good novel is as much of an illusion created by purely technical means as the illusion of depth in a picture. Not only "the 'I' of the book cannot die in the book" (as Vadim N—puts it in Nabokov's last novel) but *any* character is, in some wise, immortal both physically (because it is within the reader's power to resurrect him by the simple act of re-opening the book) and metaphysically (because "death" is but a figure of speech). At the end of Chapter Seven, Pnin narrowly but ineluctably escapes confronting N—, but is quite unable to change the master design and prevent its path from

* See above.

** See Pascal Covici's letter quoted, in part, above.

describing a full ellipse; this evolution nudges the reader to begin re-reading the story, with Pnin again entering the novel on a wrong train. As Nabokov once remarked, "You can only re-read a novel. Or re-re-read a novel."[83] Only on subsequent trips can one ignore the destination, known in advance, and enjoy various pleasures of the journey itself: the window-framed views, the smells, the little accidents, the chance companions, and, above all, the inexorable and smooth locomotion of fate. Pnin is doomed to ride an interminable, looping route, having no consciousness of previous rides. His existence, his love, his suffering, his final jailbreak are real but immaterial, inconsequential but emblematic and suggestive, vapourescent but recurrent—as though in a dream with the dreamer absent. "[In] novel after novel," says Appel in his preface to the *Annotated LOLITA*, "his characters try to escape from Nabokov's prison of mirrors, struggling toward a self-awareness that only their creator has achieved by creating them—an involuted process which [...] clearly indicates that the author himself is not in this prison."[84]

Time's axis makes this mirror-trap functional. In Section Three of this chapter I iterated Nabokov's exploration of the convenient illusion of time's "dimension" and "progress," as evidenced in his late English novels, and ventured certain extensions drawn, I thought, from his theory. I will conclude these sundry theoretical notes with a related observation enriched, I hope, by the intervening discourse.

Professor Leona Toker, in a recent work, suggests that Henri Bergson's "distinction between deliberate remembering [...] and unsolicited, genuine memory provides a paradigm for the analysis of recurrent motifs in *The Gift*."[85] The existence and the whorls of that novel's thematic design refute the "triple formula of human existence: irrevocability, unrealizability, inevitability" proffered by the hero (and faintly echoed in the epigraph). "Crude mechanical attempts at recovering what is gone," continues Mrs. Toker, "realizing the impossible, or preventing the inevitable (the end) are opposed to the genuine memory, mystical experience, and artistic inspiration that achieve a contact with 'another dimension'."[86]

Verbal art is by far the most intricate method of recapturing the irrevocable, but it pitilessly robs memory of mnemonic tissue, for the past thus evoked pales the original impression the more, the brighter and fresher and crisper is the contact print emerging from the developing drum, as if it blotted out the long remembered image. Thus goes one of those noble contradictions that whet and tickle one's sense of the transrational: the best way to preserve the past is to destroy it. Imagination realizes past in the "present" and strains itself to foresee the "future" even to its ultima. These are imagined realities, akin to the three squares drawn on each side of a Pythagorean triangle to demonstrste the famous quadratic equation. Memory is a universal instrument of human creativity, because not only recollection, but also imagination and even attempts to envisage are acts of

remembering. This thought inheres in the very core of *Pnin*'s philosophy.

Even the mere mental kneading of the idea of temporality renders one wall of the mirror-trap of time dimly translucent for a moment,[87] so that a C., a Krug, a Pnin, a Veen, or an N— may catch a furtive whiff of eternity, so ineffable and unimaginable for the book prisoners, so obvious to their spectators. These hair-ruffling, fleeting revelations are dress rehearsals of the ultimate *metabasis eis allo genos*, which the immortal fictional personae perform before the hushed audience of mortals.

V. Commentary: Format and Principles.

1.

The following commentaries consist of page by page notes keyed to the 1957 (Doubleday) hardbound edition of *Pnin*. A word, a phrase, or a line under discussion, as well as page and line number, are set in bold-face, for example,

7.4 Pnin.

where the first numeral refers to page number, the second, to the line from the top, followed by the item to be discussed. Should a paragraph, or its section, be subject to commentary, then the emboldened entry delimits the beginning and the tail of the passage (the line number marking the beginning of it).

All departures from the definitive text of the first hardbound edition, however minor, found in the *New Yorker* publication, are recorded at the end of a note.[88]

Since the notes of the Commentary treat many textual aspects of *Pnin*, I thought it unnecessary to dwell on them here. But certain outstanding cruxes must be briefly mentioned even at the risk of repetition.

2.

The idea and purpose of the present guide decidedly precludes lavish use of biographical material. In most instances I steer clear of any direct aligning of the facts and events in the novel with those occurred in Nabokov's life, however tempting such a manoeuvre might seem. As Nabokov once told his class (in the opening lecture on Proust's novel),

> Let us not [...] go into the author's life. It is of no importance in the present case and would only cloud the issue, especially as the narrator and the author do resemble each other in various ways and move in much the same environment.[89]

Nonetheless, at times such parallels proved unavoidable and even welcome, mainly because Nabokov did lend some of his memory's real possessions to his creatures in *Pnin*. It is one of a philologist's keen delights and idle but relished crotchets to hunt down a feature, a happenstance, an idea in his author's recorded existence and watch it be distilled into a singular mannerism, a little scene, a winged observation, which recur in several of his works of fiction. Such sources as the correspondence with Wilson, *Speak, Memory*, *Strong Opinions*, and Nabokov's extensive notes to *Eugene Onegin* afford an unusual opportunity, very seldom available in such variety, to check, collate, and corroborate certain inklings and hypotheses.[90] In that Proust lecture, Nabokov says a little farther, "It is pure fantasy on Proust's part, just as [...] Cornell University will be a fantasy if I ever happen to write about it some day in retrospect."[91] Without doubt, the ten years Nabokov spent teaching at Cornell, as well as his previous academic experience, gave him plenty a chance to pigeonhole necessary observations which enabled him to set up scores of *Pnin*'s episodes and situations. "Many of the most fantastic and grotesque perversions of learning in *Pnin* happen to be drawn from 'real life' in the academy."[92] It is no accident that *Pnin* is the only Nabokov novel that needed the formal disclaimer.[93] Two or three Russian names, known on campuses where Nabokov taught or lectured, have been circulating among American academics as shaping blocks for Pnin; one of those "sure models" has been recently smuggled into print.[94] Half a dozen others have been mentioned, mostly privately, as probable prototypes for various *Pnin*'s personages. The usual sort of thing: let but a man have plausibility, a knot, and a point of contact with the author, and he risks being drafted. These and similar conjectures, even if convincing, do not engage me in the least and were not allowed into my notes. The specific pointers to incidents outside Nabokov's fiction never leave the realm of the recorded—an excerpt from a letter, or a lecture, or a memoir; an opinion made public in an interview or an essay; a pertinent document (such as, for example, an old St. Mark's school's prospectus or Baring-Gould's martyrologue). My finds of this kind illustrate, not imply; they are tautegories, never allegories. Of course, it is captivating to see raw chunks of fact be crank-ground into strands of fiction, because a metamorphosis is always a thrill. If certain untoward turns that Pnin experiences in the novel also happened to Nabokov, this fact is worth noting in a work such as this only insofar as it serves to demonstrate just how such things are dressed and painted, make-up and all, before being admitted on the stage. And some amusing episodes on Nabokov's lecture tour in the fall of 1942 do resemble very much certain scenes in *Pnin*.[95] The reverse transformations are even greater fun to collect. Since Nabokov liked to point out instances of life enviously aping art, he might have registered with amusement a trade-mark Pninian situation which occurred almost two years after Chapter One had been written and published. On July 13, 1955, Nabokov informed

the Wilsons that he and his wife would be "driving to Middlebury College, where [he was to] give a lecture." They meant to visit the Wilsons on the way, but on the 16th Nabokov had to send Wilson a wire saying "Sorry to have confused dates. My lecture at Middlebury College is Wednesday,"[96] which simply begs to be set *en regard* with the following place in *Pnin*: "Had I been reading about this mild old man, instead of writing about him, I would have preferred him to discover [...] that his lecture was not this Friday but the next. Actually, however...." (26).

It was on occasions of this sort that I would sometimes find myself bound to rely on information contained in Andrew Field's *Nabokov: His Life in Part*, although I was quite aware that the book was invidious and only patchily true to fact. Yet certain things (like, for example, the curious bit about Nabokov's playing, in Yalta, in an amateur performance of Schnitzler's *Libelei*, something that N— had refused to do about three years earlier, in a different resort) could not be quoted from another source which would be less swaggering and in general less contaminated with biographer's self. And I certainly had no use for the recently published enlarged edition of Field's 1977 book, *VN*, in which the slanderous and preposterous ingredients of the earlier version were enlarged to such a proportion to the factual as to render the book utterly worthless for purposes of reference.

In compiling the present guide, I have made every effort to spot and collate the passages from other Nabokov writings, related to the text under commentary in matter or style. Owing to the principal recurrence of certain images, tropes, and situations in Nabokov's fiction, the Nabokov reader, if seasoned, has a haunting sense of *déjà lu* more often than any other prose reader. A great many parallel readings which I have traced down to their earlier or subsequent occurence in other Nabokov's books and cross-checked should attest that those scents are not false. Joan Clements was quite right, of course, when she said (of either N's): "What he is trying to do practically in all his novels is to express the fantastic recurrence of certain situations" (159). Quite naturally, adjacent works, and in particular those immediately preceding *Pnin* (*Bend Sinister*, *Lolita*, short stories of the 1940s, *Conclusive Evidence*), have proved especially loaded in this respect, yielding scores of similar local designs, plot gambits, compositional and stylistic tactics, with many fascinating variations. Nabokov was at work on the *Eugene Onegin* translation and exegesis concurrently with the composition of *Pnin*, and so he transferred some of his philological findings, and perhaps a Pushkin motif in general, into the novel. Many observations Nabokov made for his Cornell literature classes he likewise put to use in *Pnin*; the two most prominent ones are the already mentioned trick of fully introducing ephemeral characters, discussed in his lecture (and the book) on Gogol, and Pnin's little discourse on *Anna Karenin* in Chapter Five, condensed from a Tolstoy lecture. There are

thoughts and even whole scenes which Nabokov first tried in a letter to Wilson before inserting them in his novel; such cases have been recorded.

3.

In commenting *Pnin*, one must deal with the minor but curious problem of misprints. A scattering of them crops up in the hardbound edition. Some misprints, when checked against the *New Yorker* text, prove to be mere typographical errors; others might be intentional slips Nabokov chose to let stand for his own reasons. In a letter of March 17, 1957, Edmund Wilson listed errata he had spotted in the book (see *N-W*, 310); Nabokov, however, heeded only one of Wilson's suggestions in subsequent paperback editions: "prosperious" instead of "prosperous" (on p. 116). In a preface to his Pushkin work Nabokov owns that "even obvious misprints should be treated gingerly; after all, they may be supposed to have been left uncorrected by the author. Why and wherefore he did this or that is beside the point."[97]

It would seem difficult, therefore, to tell which mistakes in *Pnin* are printer's lapses and which are slips of the pen, and much more so even to try to decide which ones among the latter were inadvertent and which, deliberate. The reader will also remember that N—'s native language is Russian, and a handful of distinctively Russian bents of phrase ("in the result of," "arrived to," and such) turning up in the course of the novel may be meant to signal, and remind of, that peculiarity of the narrative. When Wilson pointed out some slight English missteps in *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, the first book Nabokov wrote straight in English, he replied: "My suggestion (which I know is not quite fair) is that the assumed author of the *Life* writes English with difficulty."[98] The "famous Anglo-Russian writer" in *Pnin* certainly knows no such difficulties, but Nabokov may have allowed faint traces of N—'s foreignness to remain.[99]

I have seen Nabokov's copy of *Pnin*'s first edition, which Mrs. Nabokov kindly let me consult. It preserves the following list of errors which the author penciled on the flyleaf (I supply the misspelled word in brackets):

p. 56 shepchu [instead of "shepchi"]
p. 81 Krieg (l.11) [instead of "Krief"]
p. 138 tramper dash (l.12) [I could not find any in the vicinity]
p. 138 Mandeville (l.24) [instead of "Mandoville"]
p. 158 sizyy (l.19) [instead of "sizlly"]
p. 163 caryatids (l.5) [instead of "caryatides"]*
p. 177 twice as big (l.10) [instead of "twice bigger"]

*Nabokov really wanted Atlantes here—see n. 163.5.

Of these *none* has been corrected in numerous Anchor Press editions, including the latest one I checked (1984).

4.

A few words on transliteration.

I do not wish to quibble over this much too earnestly debated issue whose importance outside the library lore has been, to my mind, much exaggerated. I see little harm in the coexistence of several different transliteration systems (although I confess to being allergic to the so-called scientific Slavic transliteration, with its profusion of curly diacritics and its inherent clumsiness which creates such eyesores as "Tjutčev" or "ljubjaščij tebja Jurij Vonljarljarskij"). Consistency and common sense should suffice. The system employed in this book is that of the Library of Congress, with one or two variations. However, Nabokov devised a method of his own which knew several modifications over the years. Generally, transliteration of Russian words in *Pnin* follows the system outlined at the beginning of each volume of Nabokov's *Eugene Onegin*. Its main departures from the LC fashion are as follows:

1. Russian letter ы is rendered as "ï" with a diaeresis (the second dot was often ignored by *Pnin*'s printers who would take it for a plain "i").
2. The й is rendered as "y" at the end of the word or before a consonant (e.g., "Timofey Mihaylovich Tolstoy").
3. Russian letters representing two vowels, the first one being the yod, as well as vowel letters signaling palatalization of the preceding consonant, Nabokov transliterates as "ya" or "menya," etc.
4. Russian *X* is spelled as "h": "nikakih."

Naturally, whenever I quote Nabokov's text, I retain his method of transliteration.

5.

References to Nabokov's English works are to the first American hardbound editions, except for the cases when a later edition proves more adequate because of a revision made or an introduction added. Russian works are usually cited by the first editions, with few exceptions (see *Bibliography).* Nabokov titles, and several critical works, quoted especially often, have been shortened or coded; their list is in front.

Notes

1. *N-W*, p. 282.

2. I am much obliged to Professor Brian Boyd of Auckland University, New Zealand, who provided me with information on the novel's composition and publication history. Excerpts from the correspondence between Nabokov and his publishers are quoted here and below with Mrs. Nabokov's kind permission.

3. *N-W*, p. 285.

4. Ibid., p. 290.

5. Ibid., p. 292.

6. Ibid., p. 293.

7. In a letter of July 2, 1955, ibid., p. 293.

8. Cited in Michael Juliar, *Vladimir Nabokov: A Descriptive Bibliography*. New York: Garland, 1986, p. 244.

9. See p. 49, middle column. This chapter was reprinted, under the *New Yorker*'s title, in *The Teacher's Treasure Chest*, Leo Deuel, ed., Prentice Hall, Inc., 1956, pp. 200-19.

10. *Field-77*, p. 265.

11. The chronology of *Pnin*'s composition sketched above does not seem to set any definite place for Chapter Seven. Since it could hardly have been written in a week, between August 23, 1955 (when Chapter Six was posted to the *New Yorker*) and August 29 (when the whole book went to Viking), Nabokov, for all we know, might have kept it ready for months, if not years.

12. See *N-W*, p. 300.

13. Items E30.1 and E30.2, respectively, in Juliar's *Bibliography*.

14. It is still in print. For complete bibliographical data, including *Pnin*'s translations, check the contents of section A30 and D30 of Juliar's book.

15. Unpublished letter of December 10, 1958, kindly transcribed for me by Mr. Boyd and quoted here with Mrs. Nabokov's permission. The excerpt clearly suggests that, unlike *Lolita*, *Pnin* was written on paper.

16. See *VNRN*, No.4 (Spring 1980), p. 30.

17. The day of the chapter is a "dull warm day in the summer of 1954" (112), but then the Russian notion of summer includes the entire month of June.

18. G.M. Hyde discusses some other Gogolian parallels in *Pnin* in his book—see *Bibliography*.

19. Cf. Nabokov's own treatment of the technique in his comments on the way Tolstoy imbeds Count Beust into *Anna Karenin* —see notes 122.15 and 122.19.

20. "All of his novels, Nabokov told me once, have an air—'not quite of this world, don't you think?'" (*Field-77*, p. 87).

21. See *SO*, p. 32.

22. Ibid., p. 84. This is further corroborated by the history of *Pnin*'s creation and publication—see the first chapter of this introduction.

23. See ibid., pp. 84-85. I devote to this ghost chapter a special note in the section titled "Chapter 4.5."

24. Douglas Fowler, *Reading Nabokov*, Ithaca, NY, 1974, p. 122.

25. "Pnin's History." See *Nicol*, p. 197.

26. See *Nicol* and *Connolly-P*.

27. Nabokov has employed this sort of orbital composition before, most ostensibly in *The Gift*, where the two main characters survey the dominant theme of Fate at work at the close of the novel, while its opening paragraph describes Fate's first unsuccessful attempt at bringing Fyodor G.-Ch. and Zina M. together. The device is made deliberately transparent and perfectly seamless both in the circular Chernyshevski chapter, and, especially, in a short story "Krug" (The Circle, 1934), carved from *The Gift* and published separately.

28. There is a curious approximation of this double movement in *Pnin*'s Chapter Three where "an elliptic flock of pigeons, in circular volitation, soaring gray, flapping white, and

then gray again, wheeled across the limpid, pale sky..." (73).

29. *Lectures*, p. 16, fn. My italics.

30. I sidestep the tradition and choose not to separate the theme from the motif.

31. *N-W*, p. 253.

32. *Lectures*, p. 289.

33. *Lectures*, pp. 210 and 208; italics mine.

34. *Nicol*, p. 200.

35. Ibid., p. 202.

36. See *Rowe-D*, p. 62ff.

37. For detailed criticism of Rowe's method see *BOYD*, pp. 213-28.

38. He all but falls in Chapter Two when he announces Liza's coming to Laurence and Joan (43) and again in Chapter Three (73) when he glimpses the squirrel. This theme is considered in Brian Boyd's "Nabokov's Philosophical World," in *Southern Review*, Adelaide, vol. 14, no. 3 (November, 1981), p. 264ff.

39. Not only is her name eloquent (belochka=little squirrel) but she is the wife of a "fur dealer of Russian extraction" (134).

40. Alfred Appel, in his Introduction to *Lolita*, p. xxviii.

41. Dostoevski's *Demons* could have been a passable example, had the "I" of the book been integrated there with any care. As it is, that omnipresent Chronicler is a dreadfully ungainly, artificial figure.

42. Or else this pattern can be profitably likened to the general sonata form, with all of its main movements present, from the exposition to the development to the quick recapitulation (this word appears, curiously misspelled, crossed, and rewritten, in the last paragraph of Chapter Six!), and with Chapter Seven serving as a coda to the elaborate composition shedding as it does ambiguous light on the preceding parts but repeating major themes in the original key.

43. One can hear Pnin's changed voice in a telephone receiver and catch a glimpse of him as he speeds away at the end of the last chapter, but he himself never really appears on the stage after that last scene in Act Six.

44. Nabokov used this device in *The Gift*, in the introduction to the English edition of which he wrote: "The last chapter combines all the preceding themes..."

45. Brian Boyd's book offers the most complete theory of the art of the retrograde reading of Nabokov—see especially Part Two. Here is one of his maieutic observations on this topic:

> Every major novel invents a new game, and the reader who masters its rules, which are nothing less than the sum of the book's words, can then return to play again and again, with deepening satisfaction at outcomes that persist in being different each time. [...] [Nabokov's novels are] something like board games where the pieces are arrayed in time rather than space. (*Boyd*, p. 91).

46. See *SO*, 143: "This is Van speaking [...] I have not decided yet if I agree with him in all his views on the texture of time. I suspect I don't." This was said in 1969. Cf. some of Nabokov's later comments on the matter, *id.*, pp. 184-86. See also his 1973 interview for the CBC, in which Nabokov says that he may be "still leaning upon the gate" of the conclusions reached by Van Veen in the Time section of *Ada* (*VNRN*, No. 10, Spring 1983, p. 45).

47. Cf. the opening paragraph of Chapter Five of *SM* (which in the Russian version opens on a sentence absent from the drier English one: "Na rukakh u belletrista umiraet Mnemozina" ["Mnemosyne is dying in the novelist's arms"—the grammatical play on the verb's mode, "is dying—dies," is untranslatable):

> I have often noticed that after I had bestowed on the characters of my novels some treasured item of my past, it would pine away in the artificial world where I had so abruptly placed it. Although it lingered on in my mind, its personal warmth, its retrospective appeal had gone and, presently, it became more closely identified with

> my novel than with my former self, where it had seemed to be safe from the intrusion of the artist. Houses have crumbled in my memory as soundelessly as they did in the mute films of yore, and the portrait of my old French governess, whom I once lent to a boy in one of my books [*The Defense*—G.B.], is fading fast, now that it is engulfed in the description of a childhood entirely unrelated to my own. The man in me revolts against the fictionist... (p. 95).

48. " 'I still hear', said Pnin, picking up the sprinkler and shaking his head a little at **the surprising persistence of memory**, 'I still hear the *trakh!*'," 106; [Pnin] suddenly saw, **with passionate and ridiculous lucidity**, his parents...," 75, etc. (My emphasis.)

49. It is hardly probable that the "moneyed old maid" whom that Ancharov "humored" (179) should be Pnin's initial "Baltic aunt" who adored her Khodotov "from afar."

50. One reason to do so, aside from the obvious, would be to bring into correlation, and thus into the general design, the emblematic squirrels and the name of Pnin's fiancée, Mira Belochkin, or the cocker Sobakevich, and his owner, Jack Cockerell, and so forth.

51. Eric Wind may be referring to this most difficult, and to some, most exciting, type of chess problem on p. 48.

52. *Lectures*, p. 208.

53. I use here the English translation by Dmitri Nabokov, in the *New York Review of Books*, March 31, 1988, pp. 38-42.

54. Ibid., p. 40. Italics here and in the quotation that follows are mine.

55. *Ibidem*.

56. "We arrived at last to Pnin's declaration one day that he had been "shot" by which, according to the impersonator, the poor fellow meant "fired"—(a mistake I doubt my friend could have made)." (p. 188).

57. There is a coincidental but striking lineage of subordinate mimicry in *Ada*, resembling very much Pnin's hypostases as they are imagined by Victor and Cockerell and consolidated by N—. There, a fantastic, "fantastically rare" butterfly, *Nymphalis danaus* Nab., mimicks "not the Monarch butterfly directly, but the Monarch *through* the Viceroy, one of the Monarch's best known imitators" (p. 158). Cockerell, who is Pnin's best imitator and who creates an image diametrically opposite to that of Victor's Royal father, at the end of his Pnin Act makes N— wonder whether "by some poetical vengeance this Pnin business had not become with Cockerell the kind of fatal obsession which substitutes its own victim for that of the initial ridicule." (189).

58. See *Mind. A Quarterly Review of Psychology and Philosophy*, New Series, Vol. 14 London, April 1905, p. 292, and July, pp. 400-1. The first item, by a "W.," refers to a previous publication, in the "New Series" Nos. "3 and 53" [?], p. 146. The second is a rejoinder by Bertrand Russell to the most interesting paper by Hugh MacColl, "Symbolic Reasoning," published in *Mind* previously.

59. *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth: An Essay on Orthodox Theodicy in Twelve Letters*, Moscow: Put' Publishing House, 1914, pp. 500-5. The explication of Carroll's problem that follows is based on P. A. Florenski's treatise. One must note, however, that Florenski did not see the original publication in *Mind*, and quoted it second-hand by an inaccurate citation in L. Couturat's *Les principes des mathématiques* (Paris, 1905, p. 16). Thus he apparently did not know that the "common sense" solution of the original paradox (a drearish affair about "Allen and Brown being in," while "Carr is out" etc.) had been proffered not by Couturat but by Russell (see above note); it goes, in short, thusly: "if **p** is true, **q** is false," which is identical with Florenski formal solution. However, all these complications have little bearing on the ensuing argumentation, and I mention all this only for the sake of the reader who may wish to consult an old and boisterous skirmish of famous symbolic logicians.

60. Ibid., p. 500

61. Ibid., p. 502.

62. Ibid., p. 505.

63. Or, as Russell puts it in his "complete solution" of the Carroll Paradox, "if Carr is out, Allen is in" (*Mind*, Vol. 14, 1905, p. 401). An analogous situation occurs in *Pale Fire*, in which, while both Shade and Botkin do cohabitate on the same level within the canopy of Nabokov's novel, Kinbote and his Zemblances either exclude Shade and Shade's world, or exist only as Shade's creation, without knowing that. By the way, it is not entirely impossible that Shade's transcendental fits may have something in common with Pnin's "dilating" spells: both cancel familiar time and space conditions.

64. *The New Republic*, 4 June 1966, p. 28.

65. *Boyd*, p. 82. My italics.

66. *Carroll*, p. 208.

67. "In Nabokov's art, the author is God," says Conrad Brenner in his Introduction to *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* (p. vii). This is oddly put, for the author, any *auctor*, is a god by at least two most cardinal definitions of the idea: he is a demiurgos of his creatures, and he is the only one who *is*, whereas their existence is ephemeral. On the other hand, Brenner's thought is probably similar to Boyd's who submits that Nabokov assumes the role of the creator "not merely passively, in the way every writer of fiction can be said to create his own world [the "word" in the text must be a misprint—G.B.], nor as an empty gesture of fashionable self-consciousness or facile self-display. His deliberate enactment of the role of a creator beyond the created world becomes a serious imaginitive exploration of the possibility of a designing consciousness in the universe." (p. 85).

68. One interesting point is that Falter does not seem to be able to tell good from evil anymore, as if he were back in Eden—one of Leo Shestov's favorite ideas, namely that man can gain the "meaning of all" only after ridding himself of the fetters of gnosis, which means, subjectively, returning to Adam's gardens, and objectively, losing one's mind. See, for example, his *Athens and Jerusalem*, Simon & Schuster: New York, 1968, or *In Job's Balances*, Ohio UP: Columbus, 1974.

69. *Ada*, p. 245.

70. *N-W*, p. 126.

71. Ibid., p. 183.

72. *Op.cit.*, p. 208.

73. *Boyd*, p.83. Conventions and common sense prevent me from quoting other passages from that book as remarkably apt illustrations to the theses offered here; I refer the reader interested in this course of ideas to the chapters "Beyond Consciousness" (pp. 67-88) and "In Time and Beyond" (pp. 179-95). Similar thoughts (drawn in reverse, so to speak) can be found in the already mentioned book by Florenski, particularly in "Letter Nine: Creation" (p. 260 et seq.). See especially his note 495 (p. 738), in which he cites from an old tract by the Archbishop of Kherson and Taurida Innocentius Borisov (here in my translation): "There must needs be such a mind outside us which is capable not merely of comprehending the ultimate Truth but has the power to create all manners of truths from within itself and which, although self-sufficient, comprises the very essence of Truth and embraces the whole contents of light, love, and life. Otherwise, there would or could have been no truth or good anywhere. Otherwise, the foundation of all things and of all knowledge would have been sheer naught."

74. *LATH*, p. 89.

75. *Bend Sinister*, p. xviii.

76. *Nicol*, p. 197.

77. Douglas Fowler, *Reading Nabokov*, p. 122.

78. James McConkey, "Nabokov and 'The Window of the Mint'," in *The Achievements of Vladimir Nabokov*, Ithaca, 1984, p. 31. See Dmitri Nabokov's reaction (in a review published in *VNRN* No. 14, Spring 1985, p. 14): "[Nabokov] would never have 'abruptly turned away' upon hearing McConkey say, at a noisy party, that he liked *Pnin* for its compassion: Nabokov made no secret of the fact that compassion was a prime attribute of his own, and of the novel's."

79. One could argue that the poet Podtyagin in *Mary* did not die after all, all ominous symptoms notwithstanding, for he makes a fleeting appearance, two years of fictional time later, in *The Gift*. But as far as the reader of Nabokov's first novel is concerned, Podtyagin is doomed; besides, another character from Nabokov's first novel, Alferov, who wanders on the outskirts of *The Defense* around "1929," is said to have "liked to relate how an old poet had once died in his arms" (227).

80. "Double Talk" and "Signs and Symbols." See *N-W*, pp. 154-55.

81. *SO*, p. 84.

82. *Boyd*, p. 85.

83. John G. Hayman, "A Conversation with Vladimir Nabokov—with Digressions," *The Twentieth Century*, CLXVI, December 1959, p. 449.

84. *L*, p. xxxii.

85. From a paper presented at the Modern Language Association convention at San Francisco in December 1987, the abstract of which was published in *VNRN* No. 20 (Spring 1988), pp. 49-52. It is included in Mrs. Toker's book on Nabokov which Cornell University Press is to bring out. The reader will remember that Van Veen was an attentive student and critic of Bergson's theory of "duration," creativity, and conscious attitude toward "reality."

86. Ibid., p. 50.

87. As in the most important scenes in Nabokov's play *The Event*.

88. Jane Grayson gives some interesting variances in the two texts in her *Nabokov Translated*, Oxford UP, 1977, pp. 136-38.

89. *Lectures*, 208.

90. As commentator, Nabokov could not avoid biographical digressions, either; in fact, he allots considerable space to them in his notes to Pushkin's novel.

91. Ibid., p. 209.

92. Alfred Appel, "Nabokov: A Portrait," in *NICOL-RIVERS*, p. 12.

93. It is functional and within, not outside, the novel in *Ada*, following as it does the "Family Tree." For some reason, the disclaimer was dropped from the first paperback edition of *Pnin* (1959).

94. Mr. Marc Szeftel, the late Professor of history at Cornell, in Andrew Field's *VN*, New York: Crown, 1986, pp. 291-92.

95. See Simon Karlinsky's Introduction to *N-W*, p. 16, and *Field-77*, pp. 241-47, especially p. 246.

96. *N-W*, p. 295.

97. *EO*, Vol. 1, pp.15-16. Kirkegaard says something very similar to this in *Either/Or*: "Even misprints are not to be despised, and an author who becomes witty by the aid of misprints must be regarded as having become witty in a perfectly lawful manner." (Tr. by David Swenson; Princeton, 1959, I, p.20.)

98. *N-W*, p. 51.

99. For more on misprints in Nabokov see W. W. Rowe's article "Misprints etc.," in *PROFFER*, pp.292-93.

COMMENTARIES

Chapter One

Published in *The New Yorker* on November 28, 1953.

7.1 The elderly ... Pnin.

The very first shot is a close-up of the hero, replete with such classical attributes as the full name, a thorough portrait, and a detailed description of his clothing and present whereabouts. The slight parodistic effect produced by the phrase "none other than" somehow undermines the ostensibly traditional introductory features and thus ought not to be overlooked.

Nabokov uses a similar technique in the opening sentence of *G*, where a discrediting parenthetic aside, with its subtle but clearly parodistic implication, interrupts the serene Turgenevian diction.

The art of beginning a book (and closing it) has not been adequately studied. Nabokov, who, in his Cornell lectures, criticized Turgenev for his glaring inability to master this subtle art, has brought it to intricate perfection. In *LD* and, to a certain extent, in *IB*, he employs the "archepitome" device, whereby he presents, in effect, whole story about to unfold in the opening passage, the rest of the book being but an enormous elaboration. In *Lectures-R*, Nabokov made the following remark about Chekhov's way of opening a story:

> Chekhov comes into the story "The Lady with the Little Dog" without knocking. There is no dilly-dallying. The very first paragraph reveals the main character... (255)

One of the more interesting features of Nabokov's fiction is what may be called circular, or "tail-biting" composition, which literally circumscribes the book's hermetic roundness by placing the exit sign over the entrance. A short story "The Circle," actually an appendix to *G* removed by the author from the main body, is a model exercise in that technique, chronologically preceding, as Nabokov notes in the Foreword to the story, Joyce's complete circle in *Finnegans Wake*. *Pnin* is a more elaborate example of that type of structure. The novel's closing chapter reflects and reiterates the book's main themes, and its closing sentence takes the reader back to the starting point of the novel. Surely, thematic routes may be deflected in the process, but this is another question (discussed in *IN-IV*: 1-2).

7.4 Pnin.

According to the late Boris O. Unbegaun, this is "the only monosyllabic [Russian] surname in *-in* ." (*Russian Surnames*, Oxford, 1972, p.29).

The name is, of course, a truncated variant of Repnin, and the only known bearer of it was none other than Ivan Petrovich Pnin (1773-1805), a poet and publicist, and the illegitimate son of the Field Marshal Prince Nikolai Repnin (1734-1801). The omission of the first syllable of the aristocratic father's surname was a well-known recourse under similar circumstances in eighteenth century Russia. The truncated name hardly concealed the bastard's noble origin. (See *Unbegaun*, op.cit., p.234). Other noted examples include Agin, from Elagin; Betskoi, from Prince Trubetskoi; Litsyn, from Prince Golitsyn; Rantsov, from Count Vorontsov, and a few others.

Ivan Petrovich Pnin (his patronymic presumably derived from his father's cousin's name; he might have been the poet's godfather) lived a short and unhappy life of which little is known. Among his prose writings the most frequently mentioned piece is *Vopl' nevinnosti, otvergaemoi zakonom* (1802) [The Wail of Innocence Rejected by Law], an appeal to Alexander I concerning the plight of illegitimate children. Field suggests that this work might have something to do with some of *Pnin*'s themes (see *Field-67*, p.139) which seems doubtful (see also footnote to n. 122.19). On the other hand, it is perhaps worth noting that, since Ivan Pnin is the only known bearer of that name and does not seem to have been married, Timofey Pnin's origin is doubly fictitious.

In *LATH*, the list of "Other books by the Narrator," which rather closely resembles that of Nabokov's own works, includes the title *Dr. Olga Repnin* (1946). Though Vadim Vadimych N. does not say much of that book in the novel, the following casual remark reveals at least one strikingly characteristic feature Mme O. Repnin shares with Pnin:

> ..."costumes," as my Dr. Olga Repnin says in the novel of that name—"I don't know (all 'O's' as in 'don' and 'anon') why your horseband wears such not modern costumes." (158)

Pnin's English is marked by the same flaws (see 66.7 and especially 189.25-29: "but none save my old friend... could rhyme so emphatically... 'gone' with the head of 'Goneril'.") The farcical "such not modern costumes" is simply a much too faithful reconstruction of the Russian word order (*takie nesovremennye kostiumy*), another of Pnin's incorrigible predilections. Note that the quoted remark is echoed by Liza's callous one in Chapter Two (57.29).

Unbegaun (op. cit., p.29) says that "Repnin" comes from "repnia," turnip pap, but neither Vladimir Dal's *Interpretative Dictionary of the Living Russian Language* (3rd ed., St. Petersburg, 1903-1909), nor Max Vasmer's *Russisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Leipzig, 1953-1958) corroborates this etymology. Curiously enough, the latter gives "repnut'," to crack, which supports nicely Mrs. Clements's quibble on Pnin's name in Chapter Two: "A cracked ping-pong ball." (32.20).

See also Julian W. Connolly, "A Note on the Name 'Pnin'," in *VNRN* Lawrence, Kansas, No.6 (Spring 1981), pp.32-33.

On the other hand, "Pnin," removed from this historical context, could be derived from the Russian for "stump" [pen']; indeed, many American characters in the book stumble over it. Thus, Bill Sheppard in Chapter Four pronounces it "Dr. Neen" by eliminating the 'p,' as in 'pneumonia,' whereas Miss Clyde in Chapter One turns it into "Professor Pun-neen. I hope I have it right," inserting a vowel between the two consonants and making an inadvertent but quite functional double-pun. For a curious exchange on the subject of the correct pronunciation of this tricky name between Robert Hughes and Nabokov, see *SO*, p.52. See also n.26.24.

A similar apocopation of a Russian author's name occurs in *Ada*: "*Les sophismes de Sophie* by Mlle Stopchin..." (114). The reference here is to Mme de Ségur (née Countess Sophie Rostopchine, 1799-1874), a writer of children's books. Her *Les malheurs de Sophie* (1864), which Nabokov read as a child, was translated into Russian under the title *Prikliucheniia Sonichki* (Sonichka's Adventures).

7.4 Ideally bald, sun-tanned...

Pnin's baldness and tan (the latter due mainly to the sun-lamp sessions—see Chapter Two) are among several frequently recurring characteristics assigned to his appearance to make it recognizable and individual. The device is, of course, almost as old as the novelistic art. As Humbert Humbert notes:

> ...every once in a while I have to remind the reader of my appearance much as a professional novelist, who has given a character of his some mannerism or a dog, has to go on producing that dog or that mannerism every time the character crops up in the course of the book. (*L*, 106)

As concerns dogs, Nabokov later gives one to Pnin (Chapter Six), and it accompanies him out of this book and straight to the next one, *Pale Fire*; there it lies by its master's feet in his office—very much resembling Falternfels's dog in the Chapter Three flashback (see n. 69.32).

7.6 great brown dome

On the dust-jacket of the first edition, a plausible Pnin with a reasonably large cranium holds a book entitled *Pnin*, in Russian.

Nabokov makes most interesting comments on Pnin's aspects in a letter to Jason Epstein of Doubleday, of October 1, 1956, published here for the first time with Mrs. Nabokov's kind permission:

I have just received the sketches [of the cover picture, by Milton Glazer—G.B.]. They are executed with talent, the picture as art goes is first-rate, but in regard to my Pnin it is wrong: The sketch looks like the portrait of an undergrad instructor in the English department or like a Republican's notion of a defeated Adlai, when actually he should look like a Russian muzhik clean-shaven. I am sending you some photographs of Pnin-like Russians, with and without hair, for a visual appreciation of the items I am going to discuss.

1. The head should look quite bald, without any dark margin, and must be ampler, rounder, smoother, more dome-like. Note Zhavoronkov and Yegorov [people on the accompanying snapshots. G.B.] for the type of head, which however should be bigger in Pnin's case, not egg-shaped. Maslov would be perfect, minus hair.

2. The glasses should be definitely tortoise-shell ones, with heavier, somewhat squarish frames.

3. The nose is very important. It should be the Russian potato nose, fat and broad, with prominent nostril curves. See Zhukovski for nostrils, and Obraztsov for a replica of Pnin's fat glossy organ; but Pavlov and Maslov are also good.

4. The terribly important space between nose and upperlip. This must be simian, large, long, with a central hollow and lateral furrows. See Zhavoronkov, Baykov, Yegorov, Zhukovski. The latter's lips are very Pninian. Pnin's bad teeth should not show.

5. The cheeks and jowls. Jowls and jaw should be large, broad, massive. See Baykov, Zhavoronkov, Yegorov.

6. The shoulders should be very broad, square, padded. Pnin wears a ready-made American suit of four years ago.

7. The tie should be a flamboyant one.

Now, instead of all this, the sketches show a puny Professor Milksop, with an egg-shaped face, flat nose, short upperlip, non-descript chin, sloping shoulders, and the necktie of a comedy bookkeeper. I have noticed long ago that for some reason illustrators do not read the books they illustrate. In my book, all the details listed above are mentioned in the first chapter, and repeated further on.

The lettering, title and name, is very handsome in both sketches. The larger one is perhaps more pleasing.

Splendid idea to have Pnin hold a book. The title on the book he holds should read

ПНИН
В. НАБОКОВ

7.10 strongman torso ... feminine feet ... oxfords

A similarly peculiar description can be found at least twice in Nabokov's later works:

[Raikes was] a rather corpulent gentleman with strangely thin legs... (*EO*, ii, 264)

He was a superb little man, perfectly oval in shape, with bald head and tiny feet expensively shod (the rest of his envelope looked less classy). He spoke friable English with a soft Russian accent... (*LATH*, 202)

8.5 long underwear ... silk socks.
BS:

> It was tucked deep into his long underpants which in their turn were tucked into his socks. (42)

8.11 decayed Mme. Roux
Her double guards the chapter's exit—see n. 28.10.

8.13 Paris ... fifteen years.
The necessary biographical data are introduced gradually and with great skill. The first two chapters of the novel teem with seemingly casual remarks which eventually supply the missing pieces in Pnin's jigsaw puzzle of a biography the authenticity of which will be put to question at the end.

8.17 faux col
French; an old-fashioned, removable collar buttoned to the shirt.

8.20 Nowadays, at fifty-two...
This is the first chronoscopic mark in the novel. Pnin, as the reader is to learn in Chapter Three, was born in 1898, which sets the opening of the novel in 1950.

The New Yorker: "at fifty-five."

8.21 crossing his legs ... bare shin.
This way of leg-crossing is called *po-amerikanski* (the American way) in Chapter Two. In the more demure European gesture, the knee supports the other leg's calf rather than the ankle.

8.24 a fellow passenger ... two women absorbed in a baby
It may be either N— or the reader; in the Nabokov ideal, both should coalesce into a ghostly representative of the Author. This spectral presence is most obvious again at the beginning of Chapter Five (the observer on the tower).

The two women first appeared in the very last sentence of the short story "Lance" (1952): "...two smiling women and, the object of their bright sympathy, a girl with a baby..." (*ND*, 212).

8.27 a secret must be imparted.

An oft-exploited compositional device (Turgenev had a strong penchant for it) which Nabokov typically carries to its extreme. The action is slowed down in order to gain time necessary to provide additional biographical items.

8.32 a Friday-evening lecture

The chronological information is being supplied gradually but persistently: by now the reader has learned both the year and the day of the chapter.

8.33 Cremona ... Waindell

Needless to say, the places are non-existent. Strictly speaking, all places in a good novel can be said to be utopias, be it the St. Petersburg of *Anna Karenin*, or the Dublin of *Ulysses*, or *Pnin*'s Waindell. But *KQK*'s Berlin was not set up the way *Ada*'s "Manhattan" was, because Nabokov's methods of creating the material world underwent significant evolution and refinement. In that sense, Waindell is artistically much closer to Ramsdale in *L* than it is to Emma Bovary's Rouen.

The integral world of literary creation, replete with made-up places and people, looks more plausible when a sprinkle of "real" ones is injected into it. In *Pnin*, the reader finds "Chekhov" and "Lyov Tolstoy" and even "Frank Reade" (see n. 148.21) on the same plane and planet with totally fictitious characters, and such places as New York, Kiev, or Framingham, on the same map as Cranton, Goldwin, or Waindell. And although it would be a waste of time to try and locate an ethereal town on the real map, it is both tempting and possible to match it properly with topographic bearings obtained in the book. Indeed, Nabokov himself uses this superimposition to map the Larin estate in his *EO*.

In Chapter Four, where various itineraria from "Cranton, Mass." to Waindell are discussed, the latter is said to be within four hours by bus from Albany in a NW direction (103.1). That places Waindell somewhere on the shores of Lake Ontario, or even on its floor, after the Kitezh fashion (a legendary Russian town which escaped the enemy's siege by sinking to the lake's bottom). But that also means that Waindell is practically at the same longitude as Ithaca, NY (76.03 W), where Nabokov spent ten years teaching at Cornell (which, of course, even rhymes with *Pnin*'s capital). In fact, Cornell is most often mentioned as Waindell's prototope by those concerned with such things.

There seems to be no place named Waindell on earth; of course, it conveniently lends itself to the principal pun (vandal) which surfaces in Chapter Two (see n. 34.3).

The original Cremona, on the other hand, is on the Po river, Italy; in the Western hemisphere, there is a townlet by that name just north of Calgary, Canada. And I was told that Cremona was the estate of Norton T. Dodge, a patron of Russian émigré painters (somewhere in Virginia, near Washington, D.C.).

8.33 versts.

A verst (Rus. versta) is 0.6629 mile, or 1.067 km. Nabokov evidently uses the Russian term to suggest the way Pnin would have measured the distance had he been the narrator—an intricate and roundabout way of letting a character's inner speech transcend for a moment the outer shell of narration.

9.1 since 1945.

Yet another chronological prop which helps, incidentally, to pinpoint the date of Chapter Six (1954).

The New Yorker: absent.

9.7 collected them

The New Yorker: "and collected them."

9.9 and took especial pride

The New Yorker: "took a special pride."

9.23 Aristotle, Shakespeare, and Pasteur

Representing, respectively, Wisdom, Art, and Science. Field reports that "the comic mural in Waindell, Nabokov's imaginary college... with great figures passing the torch of knowledge, was, and for all I know may still be, at Macalester College, in St. Paul, Minnesota, where he spoke to an audience of nine hundred... on November 10 [1942]." (*Field-77*, p.246).

9.25 huge ... German Department.

The beginning of the "German Theme." Waindell does not have a Russian Department until N— arrives in Chapter Seven. In *PF*, to compensate for this injustice, Pnin is given the chair in the *bloated* Russian Department (155).

9.29 In the Fall Semester ... (1950).
The New Yorker: absent.

9.30 courses ... Elementary
Since the first publication in *The New Yorker* two more students have enrolled in Pnin's courses: Miss Bliss, who holds a small but distinct part in the book and represents, along with Mrs. Thayer, the "poshlost theme" (in Chapter Two Pnin for a moment toys with the prospect of "family bliss" with her; in Chapter Six she reappears exuding her harmless, cheerful vulgarity); and Mr. Dub, who indeed never materializes. "Dub" means "oak" in Russian (pronounced *doop*) and is sometimes used colloquially in the sense "blockhead," though "dubina" is the more common term. Hence, the name lends itself to a bilingual pun: "a mere name (Ivan Dub, who never materialized)" [Mr. Dub dubbed Mr. Dupe].

The New Yorker: "course consisted of three students only: Josephine Malkin" etc.

10.5 languid Eileen Lane
A typical Nabokovian alliterative play.

10.7 Anna Karamazov
Portmanteauing a famous title is also a familiar Nabokov trick. *Ada* is full of such centaurisms; in fact, it opens on the disfigured quotation from "Anna Arkadievich Karenina." And in his lecture at Cornell's Festival of Arts, 1959, Nabokov mentions the "...idiotic movies about the brothers Karenins" (*Lectures-R*, 11).

One can all but hear Miss Bliss's or Miss Lane's mellow voice in the following memoir by Nabokov's own student (Hannah Green, at Wellesley):

> It was in this course that I enrolled in my junior year. I forget now what lucky chance led me to decide on it—perhaps, I knew that if I took it I would really read *War and Peace*. (*QUENNEL*, p.34)

10.15 Mother Volga songs, red caviar, and tea
These phony and trite attributes of "Russian culture" are further ridiculed in Chapter Three, when the Komarovs appear on the stage. An avatar of that "stupendous Russian lady" lives and dies in *LATH* under the name of Ninel Ilinishna Langley (the artificial Ninel, a popular Soviet name, is the palindromic Lenin); she is Assistant Professor of Russian at Quirn.

Authentic and spurious folk songs about the Volga are numerous. Among the best known are *Vniz po matushke po Volge* (Down the Mother Volga River) and the famous ballad about the Russian robber chief of the 17th century, Sten'ka Razin (see Nabokov's exhilirating note on that song in *EO*, ii, 279). The Russian émigré-cabaret singer "Slavska" of "The Assistant Producer" (1943) is said to have been popular because of that "hodgepodge of artificial folklore, military melodrama, and official patriotism, [as she was] pouring out her Volga-Volga song" (*ND*, 75,77). See n. 143.6.

10.17 scientific linguistics.

Cf. *SO*: "What bothered and angered me was the ineptitude of the system of Scientific Linguistics at Cornell" (294). This brief statement is elaborated in a formal complaint Nabokov placed with the Cornell authorities regarding the situation in the Russian Language Department which "has been steadily deteriorating over the number of years..." The students were not "taught to speak, read, or write Russian, but rather a method of teaching others to teach that method." (*Field-77*, 277)—a sarcastic formula which has been lent to *Pnin* verbatim.

10.25 Basic Basque

Another euphonic alliteration. In the Russian *L*, which differs in many important ways from the English original, a similar play occurs: "baskskim (ks-ks-kiska)" [by the Basque (puss-puss-pussy cat)] (221).

Nabokov once collected a curious non-basic Basque word on the Biarritz beach of his youth:

> I learned, and have preserved ever since in a glass cell of my memory, that 'butterfly' in the Basque language is *misericoletea*—or at least it sounded so (among the seven words I have found in dictionaries the closest approach is *micheletea*). (*SM*, p.148)

According to A. Griera (*Vocabulario Vasco*, 1960), the closest variant is "misirikote," but then Nabokov needed that "coletea" to introduce mimetically, in the very next sentence, the heroine of his novellette, Colette.

10.26 elaborate machines

Nabokov revisited this thought in his scorching reply to Edmund Wilson's criticism of his *EO*:

> But since these computers are fed only the basic Russian Mr. Wilson has mastered, and are directed by anthropologists and progressive linguists... (*SO*, 260)

10.28 in a grammar

One of the grammar books of the time, G. A. Birkett's *A Modern Russian Course*, 1942, mentioned favorably by Nabokov in his letter to Wilson (*N-W*, 142), is referred to in my n. 81.18.

10.30 a venerable fraud

His name, as well as those of the real authors of the book, will be revealed in Chapter Three (see 39.12).

11.12 broken English

This is one of the main thematic characteristics of Pnin, the one to be invariably reinvoked every time he is quoted directly in English. Pnin constantly mispronounces words, garbles the English syntax (light-heartedly imposing the lax Russian word order onto the more rigid English construction), ignores both the definite and the indefinite articles, and so forth.

I went through much trouble trying to transfer all these amusing and important inadequacies in my Russian version of the novel (Ann Arbor, Ardis, 1983) into the correspondingly broken Russian, but finally gave up the idea (still, such passages do retain vestiges of those fruitless efforts, for they sound somewhat stiff compared to Pnin's presumably flawless Russian).

11.19 understand under "Anarchism"

A literal rendition of the Russian phrase *chto my ponimaem pod anarkhizmom*.

11.20 mystical, abstractical ... signification.

A series of *-ical* suffices leads to this parasitic one in "abstract."

Russian "Mystical Anarchists," a literary and philosophical group of prominent poets and thinkers, flourished between 1907 and 1912 and included Viacheslav Ivanov (1866-1949) and Georgii Chulkov (1879-1939).

In the days and circumstances of Pnin's immigration to the U.S., the term was roughly equivalent to terrorism, and so Pnin's quite unnecessary scrupulousness led to his detention on Ellis Island. This ill-timed pedantry of his lets him down repeatedly in the course of the book.

Nabokov once reviewed what Wilson called "the anarchist book," *The Guillotine at Work*, by G. Maximoff (see *N-W*, 40).

The "...had for me signification" is yet another awkward calque of the Russian *imelo dlia menia znachenie*.

11.24 Ellis Island

An island in New York Harbor, the largest immigration station established in 1892 and closed in 1954 (that is, at the time Pnin was fired by Waindell in Chapter Six).

11.30 formidable set of tawny teeth

They are to be extracted in the next chapter. Here begins the "Dental Theme," a frequent motif in Nabokov's novels.

12.8 Ostrovski

Aleksandr Ostrovski (1823-1886), prolific Russian playwright.

12.9 Leskov's ... contortions.

Nikolai Leskov (1831-1895), Russian prose writer. Leskov is mentioned two more times elsewhere in Nabokov, and both times in the same belittling manner:

> "And since we are speaking of second-rank authors, what do you think of Leskov?"
> —Well, let me see... Amusing Anglicisms crop up in his style... As to his contrived punning distortion—No, spare me, I don't find them funny. And his verbosity—Good God!... And yet..." (*G*, 84)

And Godunov-Cherdyntsev, in this first imaginary dialogue with the poet Koncheyev, proceeds to enumerate antithetically several of Leskov's strikingly vivid and original descriptions. On February 15, 1958 (Pnin's 60th birthday), Nabokov, in a letter to Edmund Wilson, advises him to "steer clear of the Goncharov-Aksakov-Saltykov-Leskov porridgy mass" (*N-W*, 321).

12.12 Alexandrinka ... Moscow Artists.

The Aleksandrinskii Theatre in St. Petersburg, near the Anichkov Palace, was built in 1832 by Rossi. Its repertory consisted chiefly of Russian drama (Ostrovski, Turgenev, Sukhovo-Kobylin, Pisemski).

The "Moscow Artists" should imply the Moscow Art Theatre, founded in 1898 by Konstantin Stanislavski and Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko. In his Cornell lectures on Chekhov, Nabokov has this to say on the matter:

> The famous Moscow Theatre... was famous before it began the production of Chekhov's plays, but it is nevertheless true that this theatre... reached a new height of artistic perfection through Chekhov's plays which it made famous. (*Lectures-R*, 248)

12.25 one blow of history

Cf. *Conclusive Evidence*:

> ... as if destiny were loyally trying what it could for them [the Russian children of the beginning of this century] by giving them more than their share, in view of the cataclysm that was to remove completely the world they had known. (7)

13.1 his big shoulders shook and rolled

The same gesture at the very end of Chapter Two will serve to designate, by contrast, utter desperation.

13.13 How should we diagnose ... case

This "we" is significant. In a few pages the reader will learn that N— is Pnin's physician "for the nonce," and it is therefore up to him to determine and, if need be, cure his subject's illness.

13.16 der zerstreute Professor

The New Yorker: a parenthetic translation follows: "(the absent-minded professor)."

13.25 war with insensate objects

A recurrent motif in Nabokov's works. The closest example can be found in *LATH*:

> ... the awfulness of that watchful thing that meant at best the stab of neuralgia, the distress of insomnia, the battle with inanimate things which never disguised their hatred of me. (240)

This theme also rumbles through Iurii Olesha's *Envy* (1927): "Objects don't like me," says Kavalerov, the book's narrrator. Olesha (1899-1960) was one of the three or four Soviet writers whom Nabokov held in favor. He especially admired his *Envy*, having said once that "...Olesha managed to publish some absolutely first-rate fiction..." (*SO*, 87).

Incidentally, Pnin's heart condition may well be a case of intercostal neuralgia (see n. 21.10), and he is, of course, an expert insomniac.

14.2 Electric devices ... power station.

The mystery of electricity also puzzled and intrigued John Shade, who thought that it might be the medium that ghosts use to communicate with the living. In his poem "The Nature of Electricity," he writes:

> The dead, the gentle dead—who knows?—
> In tungsten filaments abide...
>
> *PF*, 192

Cf. also the following passages from the two time-projected short stories, "Lance" (1952), and "Time and Ebb" (1945):

> ...the emotions that gadgets provoke in me range from dull distrust to morbid trepidation. Only by a heroic effort can I make myself unscrew a bulb that has died an inexplicable death. (*ND*, 199)
>
> They played with electricity in various ways without having the slightest notion of what it really was—and no wonder the chance revelation of its true nature came as a most hideous surprise... (*ND*, 157-158)

According to Field, Nabokov once made the following curious remark: "Electricity. Time. Space. We know *nothing* about these things." (*Field-77*, 87).

The "Alarm-Clock" theme originates here. It recurs in Chapter Two (35.23), Three (see n. 82.19), and Six, where it is nicely summarized in Roy Thayer's poem (see n. 163.16).

14.17 the rest is silence ... nevermore

Hamlet's last words (5.2.356). Andrei Kroneberg's Russian version, which Pnin read in his youth (see 79.4), goes, "ostal'noe—molchan'e."

Hamlet is quoted by Laurence Clements in Chapter Two, 32.21; it is mentioned again in Chapter Three, 79.3.

"Nevermore" is the refrain in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" (1845).

14.19 Charleston ... marginal utility

The New Yorker: the Charleston.

"Marginal utility" must be a remnant of Pnin's political economy education.

14.23 Cooper ... Poe ... Edison

James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851), American writer, was very popular in Russia since the 1840s. Cooper and Poe, along with Jack London (see Chapter Four), were evidently at the top of the American literature reading list of young Pnin (and of many other young Russian readers of the time, as attested, for instance, by Chekhov's short story "Mal'chiki," The Lads, 1887). His mention of Edison reflects Pnin's infatuation with "electric devices."

The New Yorker: "Edgar Allan Poe" instead of "Edgar Poe." Also, "1945" in the next line (instead of "1941"). This time-shift prompted the following changes in the book version: what had been "by 1946" became "by 1942" (14.26), and "by 1953" was changed to "by 1950" (14.31).

14.27 To make a long story short

Pnin has an incurable and, for a foreigner, dangerous propensity to use and as often as not disfigure English idiomatic expressions. Thus he slightly stretches this one in Chapter Two (33.32).

14.29 practically any topic

The New Yorker: "quite a number of elegant cliches."

15.4 one of the younger members

This Miller is promoted, in Chapter Six, to associate professorship (see 147.30), a position Pnin (who is fired in the same chapter), never manages to attain at Waindell. Nabokov's gallery of those nauseatingly subservient young faculty members also includes Dr. Alexander of *BS* and Gerald Emerald of *PF*.

15.10 a Miss Eisenbohr

The New Yorker: "a Miss Eisenlohr."

15.12 utterly helpless ... ancient system

The whole passage happens to be a fairly accurate account of Nabokov's own technique at the lectern, as recorded in *SO*:

> Every lecture I delivered had been carefully, lovingly handwritten and typed out... (104);
>
> ... Although, at the lectern, I evolved a subtle up and down movement of my eyes, there was never any doubt in the minds of alert students that I was reading, not speaking. (5)

15.33 new black suit

This suit is doomed to be left behind in Pnin's suitcase; later, it will be replaced as Pnin's attire for special occasions by a brown "costume", paid for by the Cremona lecture, but disapproved of as "un-gentlemanly" by Liza Wind in Chapter Two (57.31).

16.3 "Don Quixote and Faust"

The title of Pnin's lecture reflects the fact that he is employed by "the eclectic German Department in a kind of Comparative Literature extension of one of its branches" (139.29). Still, it is suspiciously reminiscent of the essay by Turgenev, "Hamlet and Don Quixote" (1860). Turgenev is mentioned twice in the novel, both times in connection with Betty Bliss; she obligingly crops up here, too, in this very sentence.

16.6 Dostoevski and Gestalt Psychology

Gestaltpsychologie is based on Christian Ehrenfels's definition of "Gestalt" (Germ. shape) as a concept of integrated phenomena composing a functional and indivisible unit. The system was customized by the Freudian exegetes of literature, as well as human behavior, for various interpretative techniques (illustrated in Chapter Four).

16.18 on the third hand

A similar quip is dropped in 21.3; cf. also in *PF*:

> And one must use three hands at the same time,
> Having to choose the necessary rhyme.
> (ll. 863-864)

16.21 had written, with my help

For the first time, N— not only reveals his presense in the novel but definitely, though seemingly casually, establishes his personal relationship with the subject of his narration. N—'s intrusion originates here (see *IN-IV*: 3-5).

The New Yorker: "had, with my help, written." Also, "the Times" instead of "the New York Times."

16.24 physically possible ...

Pnin's worst forebodings do come true but not the way he expected. He invariably falls victim of his own meticulous circumspection and excessive thoroughness.

16.32 when we consider ... we all

This first person plural is part of the *poshlost'* formula Nabokov uses throughout the novel to describe the special brand of Philistinism Miss Bliss represents so convincingly. Cf. the extensive use of that cliché by Judith Clyde (26.20 ff.)

17.6 It is a cata-stroph

Pnin, typically, assumes that this word sounds in English the way it does in French. In the last chapter we learn that, when excited, Pnin loses "all control over what English he had" (188.20).

17.28 for October

Now all chronological props are in place. Among the four Fridays in October, 1950, Friday the thirteenth seems to suit the "Mishap Theme" of the chapter best. (Cf. in "Signs and Symbols": "That Friday everything went wrong." *ND,* p. 68).

18.10 Quittance ... kvitantsiya

Pnin, groping for the right word, chances upon the less common English term, perhaps Gallisizing it to boot (it means "receipt" in both French and Russian; on the other hand, the Russian "retsept" means prescription).

The New Yorker: a slightly different transliteration: "kvitanzia."

18.20 but not for the toothpick

An illustration of Pnin's pronounced (9.8) fondness of free trifles.

18.21 pine cone

A first weak but important throb of the great "Squirrel Theme" (surveyed in the *IN-IV*: 2). The squirrel of Chapter One holds an unidentifiable "reddish" object which turns out to be a peach pit (see 25.1), and *not* the pine cone as suggested in 23.10.

19.6 It was there

That is, Pnin's lecture; actually, it is Betty's, and Pnin takes much less time to discover this than it took him to find out that he was on the wrong train. For Nabokov's own misadventures during his lecture tours, see *Field-77*, 244-246.

19.29 a sensation not utterly unknown to him

It had happened to him before at least four times (see 21.6) and will happen again in Chapter Five. The digression technique involved in staging the ensuing flashback is very cinematographic: Pnin, sitting in the gloomy park of his present, his vision quivering and melting from chestpain and

fright, is actually dissolving into his former self, a boy of eleven.

19.31 rhododendrons

They will presently be transferred onto the wallpaper of Pnin's nursery, along with the oak leaves (see 20.1). In Nabokov's palette, purple plays an even more prominent role than it does in Tolstoy's (see Appendix E). For his detailed discourse on that hue, see *EO*, ii, 520.

20.4 Was it ... that pickle with the ham?

For the story of Nabokov's own severe poisoning with Virginia ham in Cambridge, Mass., see *Field-77*, 252-254.

20.7 My friend wondered. I wonder, too.

Mr. N—, the narrator, still masked, now enters the book energetically. This is the first time he calls Pnin his friend. This seemingly unpretentious, almost traditional formula is charged with meaning and ambiguity in *Pnin*. It will occur many more times in it alternately with the even more significant "my poor friend" or "my poor Pnin." (The reader will remember that the novel's working title was *My Poor Pnin*.) The history of their friendship is related only in the last chapter.

20.9 discreteness ... space traveler's helmet.

The passage immediately following this maxim is very important indeed and has various direct and oblique bearings on the evolution of the novel's plot. Loneliness may be a bitter thing to endure, and yet the lonely Pnin (and the independent and original Victor Wind) refuses to succumb to the vapid and commonplace surroundings. In fact, all original and intelligent characters in *Pnin*—Laurence, Victor, Lake, Pnin,—are regarded as weird eccentrics by the mediocre majority because of their inability to shine socially or blend with the environment, be it Waindell's academic community or St. Bart's prep school. People are not particularly fond of them: Pnin is at best ignored, at worst, ridiculed and rudely mocked; Laurence Clements is said to be "the most original and least liked scholar on the Waindell campus" (156.19). This is, no doubt, one of the reasons why Pnin abhors so much Liza's Freudian flirting with "groups" and common denominators, with communally shared conventional instincts and beliefs. It also explains, partly, the sympathy Victor (who, in his fantasies, pictures himself a "Solus Rex") feels toward Pnin—who warmly reciprocates.

A curious verbal coincidence: Herbert Gold remembers Nabokov

saying once, "I travel through life in a space helmet" (in *GIBIAN-PARKER*, p.50).

20.13 Death is divestment, death is communion

This pronouncement is rhythmically close to the one that the hero of Nabokov's last novel makes "Death is silly, death is degrading." (*LATH*, 240).

20.17 that divestment, that communion

The New Yorker: added: "His chest hurt." Perhaps, Nabokov dropped that symptom as too obviously referring to a heart problem, whereas Pnin's condition is not so easy to diagnose.

20.21 I am his physician

N— now assumes this new role, aptly implying that it is he who can diagnose the disease he has inflicted upon his character and "friend."

20.25 New Collegiate Webster

This is apparently the 1949 edition, which Nabokov also possessed in those days. In a letter to Edmund Wilson he writes: "If you open Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 1949..." (*N-W*, 279). Much as Pnin did, Nabokov used that particular edition as his "traveling companion" (see *SO*, 178). For his famous "Unabridged Webster," see n. 78.13.

20.30 doctors examined him

The New Yorker: "doctors had examined him." And, in the next line, "the cardiograph outlined" was "and cardiograph had outlined."

20.32 fatal deseases

See n. to 126.11. For the diagnosis of Nabokov's ailment which in a certain way resembled that of Pnin, see n. 21.10.

21.6 February 15 (his birthday)

The New Yorker: "May 18."

Does this variant suggest that by the time of the magazine publication of Chapter One (November 28, 1953),Nabokov had not yet had the "Birthday" theme ready to be woven into the fabric of Chapter Three?

Possibly. After all, *Pnin*, unlike all of Nabokov's other English novels, was composed in the natural sequence of chapters (see *SO*, 84). Pnin's birthday (which also happens to be that of Bel N.—see *LATH*, 168—and, by a singular coincidence, of *Pnin*'s Russian translator) is given, of course, in the New Style (see n. to 67.4). As for the other dates in this passage, I could not find any meaningful correlation among them. Is there really a way they can be manipulated thematically to explicate their choice? Mrs. Vladimir Nabokov, when I asked her about this, said that she doubted it; she thinks that, perhaps, these dates might have had a certain mnemonic significance to the author (who once admitted that he usually picked memorable dates for practical reasons—see *SO*, 75). But whatever that significance might have been here, it is irrevocably lost now. A few examples of such mnemonic dates: both Lolita and Knight were born on December 31 (Lolita also died on that day); Lolita is set free of Humbert on the 4th of July; Knight dies in 1936, and the crucial telephone number his half-brother desperately tries to remember is 61-93 (see *Olcott*, p.105); April 1 is an important entry in Hermann's diary (*Despair*), etc.

21.10 pain and panic

This alliterative formula haunts Nabokov's novels, especially *Ada*. Here are several random examples: "to alleviate the pain and the panic" (*BS*, 122); "mental panic and physical pain joined black-ruby hands" (*Ada*, 26); "panic and pain, like a pair of children. . ." (*Ada*, 28); "never reaching the coveted filthy hole in the panic and pain of infinite night" (*Ada*, 315); and, in a slightly different version, "the pang and panic" (*Ada*, 200).

"Pain" is one of the book's most persistent tunes, and it is not for nothing that in Chapter Six Pnin the Lame Punster tells Hagen that "the history of man is the history of pain." William Carroll, who was the first to notice this connection, thinks that in Pnin's very name the "explosive pronunciation reverberates the word 'pain' " (*Carroll* p.204; see also fn.5 on p.216). The phrase reappears in 23.12.

In describing his own obscure ailment to Wilson, Nabokov uses the same phrase:

> . . . neuralgia, the symptoms of which, the wracking, unceasing pain and panic, mimic diseases of the heart and kidney, so that for days on end I was experimented upon by doctors although I told them I knew my illness by heart, had gone through exactly the same torture four times in my life before. (*N-W*, 236)

Could it be "intercostal neuralgia" in Pnin's case, too? Note that N—(Pnin's physician "for the nonce") doubts that it was a heart attack (20.20), and that Nabokov's "pain and panic" only "mimic diseases of heart." It should be further noted that Pnin, too, had experienced that "seizure" exactly four times in his life prior to this one (he will have another one in Chapter Five).

Recently I happened upon an article in *The New York Times* (of 3 November, 1983, by Jane Brody), entitled "Panic Attacks" and containing some curious observations which seem pertinent to Pnin's condition:

> Imagine yourself riding on a *crowded bus* on the way to work. Suddenly, out of the clear blue, your heart starts to pound, you can't catch your breath, you feel dizzy, disoriented, nauseated and panicky. You think you are going to die or go crazy [my italics].

All Pnin's symptoms are there, including the fear of dying ("was he dying?" [21.17]). Furthermore, the disorder is linked to ochlophobia ("though your legs have turned to rubber, as soon as the bus stops you push your way out onto the street and start running, anywhere, just to get away from the crowds"), which is at the core of the discussion of "discreteness" in *Pnin*. This fear of crowds often begins in one's late teens or early twenties, and Pnin's first attack occurred when he was twenty-two (on the Fourth of July, 1920). The author of the article further states that the "victims shunted from doctor to doctor in vain search of an explanation or cure." These panic attacks "usually last only a few minutes"; Pnin's, indeed, "happened in a flash" (21.26). More curious yet, Dr. Klein of the New York State Psychiatric Institute (who, for all I know, may well be a stray personage from *Pnin*'s Chapter Four—see n. 91.13) maintains that the "outset of panic attacks is preceded by a 'bad experience, a loss or separation' [rather, "the loss *of* separation," by the Discreteness Law] such as a death in the family, divorce or moving away from a special person." While the reader can only conjecture what "bad experiences" might have caused Pnin's previous four instances of similar discomfort, the two he goes through in the book are indeed preceded by very frustrating incidents: the first, by his travel mishaps, the second, by the sudden and painful recollection of his fiancée's death in a Nazi camp.

Another recent popularization of the subject ("The Fight to Conquer Fear," *Newsweek*, **April 23**, 1984), describes almost the entire syndrome of Pnin's sensations as shared by other panic attack victims:

> Their palms go sweaty, their hearts race, they feel dizzy, weak-kneed, short of breath... It is, say those who know, about as bad as a massive coronary, except that you can get one every week, or oftener, for your whole life. "The symptoms were so real I couldn't believe it wasn't my heart," says Kirby Allsup, a 43-year-old housewife... etc. (69).

21.17 And suddenly

The New Yorker: "And then suddenly."

21.18 sliding back

This technique, perhaps cinematic in a way, is employed three more times in the course of the narration: at the end of Chapter One, in Chapter Three, and in Chapter Five. For detailed discussion of some cinematographic features of Nabokov's prose see Alfred Appel's *Nabokov's Dark Cinema*, New York, 1974.

21.20 dramatic privilege of drowning individuals

Cf. *Ada*: "Like a drowning man seeing his whole past..." (455).

21.22 a veteran psychoanalyst

This theme, here inchoate, will spring forth in Chapter Four. Incidentally, ochlophobiacs, according to the *New York Times* article cited above, "have traditionally been treated with psychotherapy or analysis."

21.26 between the first immersion and the last

Cf. a passage in *SM*:

> As if subjected to a second baptism... I felt myself plunged abruptly into a radiant and mobile medium that was none other than pure element of time. (21)

21.28 happened in a flash

Humbert Humbert also laments the inadequacy of the conventional way of registering on paper, in "so many consecutive words," a furtive sensation:

> I have to put the impact of an instantaneous vision into a sequence of words; their physical accumulation in the page impairs the actual flash, the sharp unity of compression... (*L*, 99)

Certain metaphysical features of John Shade's strange adolescent fits resemble Pnin's condition:

> A thread of subtle pain,
> Tugged at by playful death, released again,
> But always present, ran through me. One day ...
>
> There was a sudden sunburst in my head.
> And then black night. That blackness was sublime.
> I felt distributed through space and time.

...During one winter, every afternoon
I'd sink into that momentary swoon.

PF, Canto One, ll. 139-158

21.31 Leo Tolstoy

Nabokov's English books often house "real people," adding ambiguous plausibility to the totally invented world. Tolstoy (who in *Ada* is said to have been Demon Veen's pal) is mentioned again in Chapters Three, Four, and Five. Judith Clyde, characteristically, confuses him with Dostoevski (see 26.30).

22.2 Umov

This somewhat artificial surname looks as if it were a result of yet another bastardization, either of the very common Russian name Naumov or of the less common Dobroumov. "Mme Pnin, née Umov" is a remarkable combination which reminds one of the quaint Russian custom (heeded through a good part of the 19th century) to give literary characters implausible stage names.

22.5 He was eleven

Therefore, the year is 1909.

22.7 First Gymnasium

The classical grammar school in Russia. N— himself attended a "more liberal school" (see Chapter Seven), apparently, the Tenishevskoe Uchilishche, a private liberal school in St. Petersburg.

22.11 Belochkin

He is the father of Pnin's fiancée Mira. "Belochka" in Russian means "a little squirrel," and this "Mr. Squirrelkin" introduces an important emblematic theme to the book (see *IN-IV*: 2). W. W. Rowe thinks that Mira's rather capricious ghost haunts the novel in the squirrel guise (*Rowe-D*, p.64.)

In the *New Yorker* version, the pediatrician's name is "Sokolov" (Mr. Falcon), so perhaps this revenant theme had not been teased out completely by 1953. This Dr. Sokolov is mentioned in *SM* (p.109), and Field records an interesting reminiscence:

> Winter was serious colds and fevers with *kompressiki*, compresses of cotton wool and American cloth administered by the family pediatrician, Dr. Sokolov... (*Field-77*, 100)

In *The Eye*, a certain Dr. Sokolov is said to be an "army doctor" (57).

Pnin's gentle doctor's looks resemble very much those of a chance character in *LATH*, the disturbingly absentminded librarian:

> He had been an army surgeon before the Revolution and, with his close-cropped gray hair, clipped mustache, and neat imperial, bore a striking resemblance (abetted no doubt by the eager spirit that patches up worn parts of the past with new impressions of the same order) to the kindly but cold-fingered (and cold-lobed) doctor who treated the "inflammation of the lungs" I had in the winter of 1907. (110-111).

The two sets of descriptive features run parallel and come from the same mnemonic drawer ("Russia. Childhood. Doctor.") in Nabokov's atelier.

22.16 Belochkin

The New Yorker: "The Doctor."

22.26 the hue of urine and fever

The Narrator expertly increases his patient's, and almost the reader's, temperature to febrile by purely literary means.

22.30 cocooned pupa

Apart from the obvious entomological connotation, the word had, in Russian, another meaning (coincidental, no doubt), registered by Vasmer in his *Russisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*: "Kosende Anrede für ganz kleine Kinder, Petersburg (1890)...."

Pups was one of Nabokov's pet names as a child (*Field-77*, 98), and in Chapter Two of the Russian version of his memoir Nabokov mentions that his mother used to call any little roundish object a "pupochka" (little pupa).

23.6 an old man hunched up on a bench

The "twofold nature" of Pnin's surroundings makes him, as well as the reader, see at the same time the screen in his nursery (with a squirrel pyrographed on it) and himself sitting on the bench and invoking the forty-year-old memory of that nursery and the screen, while the squirrel samples a peach stone at Pnin's feet (see 24.33). Both visions fuse, as memory and "reality," the pluperfect and the "present," constantly do in the book. In like guise, Pnin simultaneously sees rhododendrons printed on the nursery wallpaper and growing around him in the Whitchurch park. Later, during his second and milder attack in this chapter, he espies his long-dead parents and friends interspersed among his makeshift audience.

Artistically, the description of Pnin's childhood fever, with its creeping and shivering chills grading into the roaring, arid delirium, and with its double visions and tentacled images, is a marvel of complex and subtle narrative art. The "evil designer," who so thoroughly and masterly blends Pnin's past and present, does hold the key to the riddle Pnin is vainly but fervently trying to solve.

23.7 a squirrel ... reddish object

At length, the Squirrel appears on the stage for the first time. This minor character emblazons every chapter in the novel. The "reddish object" in the rodent's paws is not a nut, nor is it a pine cone (see 18.21); it is a peach stone.

A "large peach stone" is the last object that comes from Luzhin's pocket emptied minutes before self-defenestration (*The Defense*, 252), and Nabokov closes his Introduction to the English version of the novel by noting that he gave his hero "the stone of the peach [he] plucked in [his] own walled garden" (*id.*, 11).

Paul Grams has suggested that the "reddish object" might be, "symbolically," Pnin's suffering heart (*Grams*, 201); combined with W. W. Rowe's theory (Mira Belochkin's ghost guiding and guarding Pnin in the guise of a squirrel), this idea may no doubt lead to some other observations, spectral or vascular (consider, for example, Pnin's reverence, mixed with repulsion, toward his heart, pp.18-19). This commentary, however, deliberately shuns any conscious or subconscious attempts to seek out and treat symbols as literary realia with trans-literary implications or ambitions. If, on the other hand, one peels off the thick sooty crust of reckless Freudian usage, the good old Greek meaning shows, glistening: the two matching halves of a single signal image. It is with this definition in mind that I quote a curiously apt description in *L*:

> The animal, a terrier of sorts, was losing and snapping up again and adjusting between his jaws a wet little red ball... I could not swim with my heart in that state, but who cared... (238)

23.16 combination ... of seven different oak leaves

One is tempted to suggest that each of these leaves makes a delicate vignette to each of this septet novel's chapters.

Among several working titles of what finally became *SM* was "The Anthemion," which is the name of a "honeysuckle ornament, consisting of elaborate interlacements and expanding clusters" (*SM*, Foreword; see also Appel's note in *L*, 352). In similar fashion, the network of crisscross themes makes up the fabric of Nabokov prose.

23.21 recurrence of the pattern

This is a definite lead to the solution of the riddle tormenting Pnin. This recurrence, the "reappearance of this or that element of the series" (23.25), disguised as the wallpaper ornamental arabesque, constitutes the single most important and original feature of the book's design (and not of this book only, but essentially of every Nabokov book), which Joan Clements astutely brings out in Chapter Six: "...what he [N—] is trying to do... practically in all his novels is... to express the fantastic recurrence of certain situations" (159.29). Such recurrences combine to form a string, a theme, and themes in Nabokov's fiction interknit and interact to create a desired texture and dimensions for the fantastic world. Pnin obviously cannot discern the pattern, try as he may, because he is part of it and thus is incapable of elevating his vantage point to the convenient observation position both N—and the reader enjoy (cf. the beginning of Chapter Five).

For an interesting correlative variant in the *New Yorker* version of Chapter Six ("recurrent design"), see n. 173.1.

23.29 the evil designer

Cf. "the dreadful inventor" of 185.12. The Narrator, the capital N. of the book (and also its secret "I"), has indeed "concealed the key of the pattern with... monstrous care," and there is no way whatever Pnin can discover it without trading for it his sanity. Both Adam Krug of *BS* and Adam Falter of "Ultima Thule" lost theirs the moment they learnt "the ultimate truth," which at least in one case (perhaps, in both) was the maddeningly simple fact that one was but a character in a book. Compare the "evil designer" passage in *Pnin* to the following thought crossing Krug's mind:

> ... had he been a character in fiction, he might well have wondered whether the strange doings and so on had not been some evil vision, and so forth. (*BS*, 188).

23.31 that key ... as life itself

This note also sounds in *BS* :

> ...the luminous pattern he saw assumed a strange, perhaps fatal significance, the key to which was half-hidden by a flap of dark consciousness on the glimmering floor of a half-remembered nightmare. It would seem that some promise had been broken, some design thwarted, some opportunity missed—or so grossly exploited... (209)

24.1 —alas, too lucid—... in the struggle

This aside ("alas, too lucid") is purposely and enticingly ambiguous (as is the whole episode of Pnin's fever—see above). It is quite in keeping with Pnin's rapidly advancing delirium, with its "too lucid" detachment

from "reality" and stubborn pursuing of weird and impossible tasks set by sick imagination; but, on the other hand and on another plane, Pnin, who in the maze of *recollection* of his childish illness is groping for the key to the puzzle of his very existence, actually all but reaches it.

24.4 school, dinner, or bedtime

Time becomes wrinkled and shrunken in one's fever as it does in Nabokov's novels. Later, Pnin gives a little discourse on Relativity of Time in *Anna Karenin*—see Chapter Five.

The line is expanded and elaborated in *BS*:

> ...to be going to bed, to be going to school—bedtime, dinnertime, tubtime, never just 'time'; time to get up, time to go out, time to go home, time to put out all the lights, time to die. (167-68)

The last phrase proves to be prophetic, for Krug's son is about to be murdered.

24.11 in response to the expansion

The sensation of an "expanding universe," along with Nabokov's struggle with mathematical monstres during his own scarlet fever, is described in his memoir (*SM*, 37). John Shade's childhood fits had similar symptoms.

In the course of Pnin's brief spell of the same illness at the end of Chapter Five, he experiences the "sense of diffusion and dilation" (133.18).

24.14 lacquered screen ... reflection of ... same glass.

The concatenated theme of a distorted reflection emerges with certain regularity in every chapter; its focal center is in Chapter Four (pp.97-98); for its summary, see *IN-IV*: 2.

24.21 twofold nature ... holding at last the key

Note how Nabokov achieves the desired superimposure effect exclusively through the aggregation of subtly woven images and without resorting to explicit psychological descriptions.

By conjecturing, however dimly, the "twofold nature of his surroundings," Pnin stops short of unraveling the main secret of his existence, namely, that his being is totally dependent on his creator's stylistic preferences and compositional whims.

24.25 rustling wind

This wind "confuses the pattern" and brings Pnin back to his present; in Chapter Five, it helps him sink momentarily to the past, giving him yet another opportunity to retrieve the key to the pattern (see n.114.3). W. W. Rowe thinks that wind, along with whirling dust, raindrops, and other meteorological phenomena, signifies and precedes a ghostly interference (see *Rowe-D*, *passim*).

24.32 Moscow Fire—1812

That famous conflagration followed the French invasion of Moscow. The same allusion concludes Pnin's second, almost halcyon, attack at the end of the chapter (see n. 28.6).

24.33 A gray squirrel ... The wind paused

The squirrel, which leaped from the screen of Pnin's past right onto the park walk of his present, still holding the "reddish object" (now one can clearly see that this is a peach pit), emblematically rounds up the artistic somersault just performed by N—. The wind, pausing as it does and then stirring the foliage again, draws not so much Pnin's weakened attention but rather the reader's doubled one to that important accomplishment.

Cf. "the wind had subsided" at a critical point in Chapter Five (see n.115.20).

The same rodent clambers upon a bench in *Ada*:

> A silver-and-sable skybab* squirrel sat sampling a cone on the back of a bench. (94)

25.9 It was now four-twenty

Pnin took the four-o'clock bus (see 17.11), rode for several blocks, got off, and was trudging through the park when he was struck by the "seizure"; now we are told that only twenty minutes have elapsed. It truly happened "in a flash."

25.25 Bob Horn

Yet another secret chink in the tale's seemingly impregnable armour. The name of the steward of N—'s aunt's estate is Robert Karlovich Horn (178.15), as the first time reader learns at the novel's end. Why should N— borrow that name for a chance character in Chapter One? This inconspicuous detail may be used to support the theory that, whereas the major episodes involving Pnin might have been related to N— by several

* What is "skybab"? Can it be the miscued "skybal"—wretched, lean, worn-out? It would further enrich the tremendous "s-l" alliteration of the sentence.

sources (Cockerell, among others, especially for Chapter One), he embellished, elaborated, and revised them substantially, and finally supplanted many events with ones of his own invention, giving small parts to the extras from his own troupe.

In his *Gogol*, Nabokov dwells at some length on Gogol's unique and grotesque handling of this particular trick—peopling fiction with swarms of entirely peripheral characters cropping up in the margins with every turn of the plot or even the period.

25.30 I ... hate happy ends ... unethically.

"Being a character in one of the Vladimir Nabokov fictions is evidently not much fun," aptly notes a critic (*Carroll*, 203). A good example of what Nabokov can do to his hero (to simulate an unhappy ending but really just to put off a happy one—which, in a sense, is the end of every book) may be found in the ever so rapidly advancing final chapters of *BS* or *RLSK*, especially the "Train episode" in the latter (pp. 191-3).

The inexorable avalanche of doom traverses the whole novel and turns, in Chapter Six, into the black cliff looming over Pnin's house (see n. 145.5 and 164.14), and only then collapses on the "poor Pnin" (he miraculously escapes). The simile appears, in a slightly different version, in *L*:

> ...suspended on the brink of that voluptuous abyss (a nicety of psychological equipose comparable to certain techniques in the arts) (62).

Jack Cockerell obviously is not fond of happy endings, either—see n. 191.25.

This particular turn of the phrase, "Had I been reading ... instead of writing about him," with its far-reaching implications (discussed in *IN-IV*: 3-5 and throughout this Commentary), obtains in Nabokov's early short story, "The Passenger" (1927): "I know your manner, said the critic... If you were writing a detective story, your villain would have turned out to be not the person whom none of the characters suspect [sic] but..." etc. (*DS*, p.79). This passage is significant not only because it contains a brief exposition of Nabokov's plot-setting system, elaborated in *Camera Obscura* and *Despair* and used in one way or another in practically all of his novels, but also because it marks the first occurrence of a certain peculiar gesture which turns up in Nabokov's prose with some regularity, and in *Pnin* is assigned to Betty Bliss—see n. 152.14.

26.4 not this Friday but the next. Actually, however...

Actually, however, Pnin might have produced, right at the lectern, the wrong lecture after all (Betty's paper on Dostoevski, for example,—which

would nicely fit and punctuate Miss Clyde's introductory slip—see n. 26.30), in accord with Cockerell's version of the event as related in the very last sentence of the novel. See also *Field-67*, 137. In N—'s version, however, Pnin stuffed his pockets with all three lectures "thus thwarting mischance [the one which "actually" happened according to Cockerell] by mathematical necessity."

During his 1942 lecture tour, Nabokov, "to his extreme horror... arrived for his speech without the text he thought he had in his jacket (but the impromptu version was wholly successful)." (*Field-77*, 246).

26.16 two bright eyes ... blue lunacy

Clubs—reading, women's, any—placed high on the list of Nabokov's loathings. In a letter to Wilson, Nabokov recalls his appearance at one such club:

> I have been pining away ever since the chairman of a Women's Club where I had been reading my verse said to me with a lyrical leer: 'What I loved best was the broken English.' (*N-W*, 91)

26.21 China

Pnin is more out of place in that club than he thinks or, for that matter, than his audience may suppose. Such things as the mention of the lecture on China (taken over by the Communists, under the Soviet auspices, about one year before), or of Professor Herring's book, *Russia Awakes*, published five years after the Bolshevik revolution (see n. 28.10), should and do stress the fact that Pnin is a doubly foreign body here. His talk, "Are the Russian People Communist?," which ought to be about Russia's intelligentsia, murdered and forced into exile and fiercely scornful of the plenipenitentiary Soviet commune,—is bound to raise a few eyebrows and then fall on the sea of deaf ears.

26.24 Pun-neen

The punning on Pnin's name ranges through this novel and even breaks into Nabokov's next:

> Shade: "Sir, we all find it difficult to *attack* that name" [laughing].
> Professor Hurley: "Think of the French word for 'tire': *punoo*."
> Shade: "Why, sir, I am afraid you have only punctured the difficulty" [laughing uproariously]. (*PF*, 268)

This "punctured *punoo*" quip is not unlike Joan Clements's attempt, "a cracked ping-pong ball" (32.20). Pnin's very name effectively evolves into a small theme in its own right (with the "pun" and "pain and panic"

elements always present and interplaying—see n. 21.10).

Gerard de Vries seems to see a connection between this particular method of garbling Pnin's name and the name of Anna Akhmatov's husband, N. Punin, which is an odd proposition (see *VNRN*, No.18 [Spring 1987], p.57). De Vries calls him her "second husband," perhaps confusing Punin with V.K. Shileiko, an Orientalist, to whom Anna Akhmatov was married between 1918 and 1921.

26.29 afterwards

The New Yorker: "afterward."

26.30 Dostoevski's family doctor

Pnin's father once treated Tolstoy (see 21.32): thus the amalgamative "Anna Karamazov" transpires again, while Pnin's "distinguished hostess" not only garbles his name but also tampers with his past—just as, presumably, N— does. See also n. 26.4.

According to Field, a newspaper announcement called Nabokov, prior to his appearance at Macalester College (a stop on his 1942 lecture tour), a "celebrated Soviet writer and a personal friend of Joseph Stalin" (*Field-77*, 246).

27.7 Her ancestors on both sides fought on both sides

This farcical bit echoes the immediately preceding absurdity Miss Clyde blithely dropped, about Pnin having "traveled quite a bit on both sides of the Iron Curtain."

27.10 Response, A Hundred Love Lyrics

The New Yorker: "a collection of a hundred love lyrics." In the next line, "In 1922 she received" was "In 1922, she published her first collection 'Remembered Music'. In 1924, she received. . . ."

27.15 with an additional systole here and there

This phrase can be found in *BS*, 126 (in the scene in the anteroom where Paduk's heart is thumping, amplified).

27.20 Baltic aunts . . . the great ham actor Khodotov

One wonders if one of those Baltic aunts could not be the "moneyed old maid. . . whom Ancharov [another ham actor] humored" (179.10). Or perhaps it is Ancharov who was lifted, together with his provincial

mistress, from N—'s memory and installed, under a different, but rather pat name (Nikolai Khodotov, 1878-1932, was a noted Russian actor employed, since 1898, by the Aleksandrinski Theatre in St. Petersburg) into his tale about Pnin, *eo ipso* prompting the careful reader to suspect N—'s reliability.

The wry phrase "the great ham actor" can be traced back to Ivan Bunin's *The Life of Arsen'ev* (1930): "Znamenityi provintsial'nyi aktior" (*Sobranie Sochinenii in Nine Volumes*, vol. 6, Moscow, 1966, p.217).

27.26 a dead sweetheart of his

Mira Belochkin, Pnin's love, was murdered by the Nazis in a concentration camp (see the end of Chapter Five). This is the last throb of the "Squirrel Theme" in Chapter One.

In *Drugie Berega* (the memoir was being Russianed just before, or perhaps even during, the composition of *Pnin*'s Chapter One), Lenski's fiancée, whom Nabokov and his brother once met in Berlin, has the same name and patronymic as Pnin's fiancée—Mirra Grigorievna (p.152).

27.27. murdered ... many old friends

In his semi-trance, Pnin sees the translucent ghosts of his friends and parents, long dead, sitting among "more recent people" of his audience. The double nature of his hazardous existence, ever prone to slipping into the past, is exposed once again. This theme scales here its compositional and emotional pinnacle, then evaporates rapidly.

Nabokov's essentially unexampled and consistent technique of constructing a chapter as a self-sufficient, almost autonomous entity within the enveloping globe of the novel is discussed in *IN-IV*: 1-2.

In *SO*, Nabokov writes that in his own oneiric trance he would see "in realistic detail a long-dead friend turning toward me and melting into another remembered figure against the black velvet of my eyelids' inner side." (144).

27.31 Vanya Bednyashkin

"Bedniazhka" means "poor thing" in Russian. Odessa was one of the last footholds for the Russians fleeing the rapidly encroaching Bolsheviks. The other one in the South was Sebastopol, on the Crimean peninsula, and it was from that town that both Pnin and Nabokov went into exile.

27.33 his father had been a Liberal

The term is used here and elsewhere in Nabokov's writing to designate Russian pre- and post-revolutionary political forces in opposition to both

the Monarchy and the Bolsheviks, and, more specifically the Kadets, members of the Constitutional Democratic Party (renamed after the November, 1917, coup to *Partiia narodnoi svobody*, The People's Freedom Party), of which Nabokov's father was a co-founder and one of the most prominent members. See *SO*, 96, and *N-W*, 306.

The New Yorker: "Liberal" is not capitalized (which slightly dilutes the specific meaning of the term).

28.2 Dr. Pavel Pnin and his anxious wife

This spectral couple briefly reappears in Chapter Three (they float across Pnin's misty vision-field, sitting as they are in their St. Petersburg living room), and in Chapter Five (on the veranda of their Baltic *dacha*).

28.6 1912

It was the centennial year commemorating the Russian Army's victory over the French. Cf. 24.31 ("Moscow Fire").

28.9 a poem by Pushkin

It could be either "Napoleon on the Elbe River" (1815), or "Napoleon" (1821), or "To Russia's Slanderers" (1831). The latter, while provoked by more recent events in Poland, has some deliberately obvious allusions to the war with Napoleon, victorious for the Russians; it was a great favorite at public recitations, especially those of the fiercely nationalist-patriotic kind.

28.10 Miss Herring ... author of "Russia Awakes" (1922)

Both the name and the title are *parlants*, for Miss Herring is clearly red (see n. 26.21). Cf. in *SM*: "... the sort of fatuous *Dawn in Russia* stuff that eloquent English and American Leninists wrote in those years [that is, the early twenties]" (p.263).

Together with Mme Roux, placed at the very beginning of the chapter (see n. 8.11), Miss Herring seems to form a curious couple which either underscores the chapter's rotundity—or is, perhaps, but a *hareng saur*.

Chapter Two

With a view, perhaps, to placing it in the *New Yorker*, Nabokov entitled the chapter "Pnin Had Not Always Been Single."—see *IN-I*.

29.1 The famous ... bells

This is the first part of an encircling image; the Waindell bells will appear at the very end of the chapter, on the cover of a local magazine (see n. 61.21).

29.5 Philosophy of Gesture

The "Gesture Theme," which originates here, eventually acquires prominence.

29.9 framed in the picture window

There is an interesting, albeit perhaps purely chance antecedent to this metaphor in Ivan Goncharov's *Precipice* (1869): "Each window in the house was a frame of its own picture" (Part I, Ch.7).

30.18 The bells ... oranges and lemons

Suggests a pun on Laurence Clements's name, derived from a nursery rhyme: ... Oranges and lemons / Say the bells of St. Clemens. (Discovered by *Lokrantz*, p. 79).

30.19 Trebler

Yet another "stage name" in the book—an old-fashioned slapstick device occasionally employed by Nabokov to achieve the "defamiliarization" effect by deliberately exposing some parts of the fiction mechanism. Some other names in the catalogue are Bièvre, Bliss, Dub, Albina Dunkelberg, Rosetta Stone.

31.1 Technically speaking ... conversations ... minarets

Nabokov's own art of rendering telephone dialogues is extremely sophisticated; perhaps the best examples are Mrs. Chernyshevski's call on Fyodor's behalf in *G*, and, particularly, the nimble transition in *BS* where the narration is switched indiscernibly from Krug's apartment to Ember's and back during their telephone exchange (pp. 24-29).

The rather quaint comparison with an oriental town will remain baffling until the reader realizes that Joan (or N— who reaches the hall before she does) cannot help facing, while answering the call, the watercolor "with the minarets" hanging above the telephone, which is

revealed only a score of pages later (54.18). The theme of an "oriental town" (Constantinople) is picked up in a forthcoming conversation between Pnin and Joan (33) in the course of which it transpires that both remember the Turkish for "water" (cf. "...with water so precious," 31.5). The "rugs for sale" motto refers to the "once Turkish" rug Pnin purchased from the old Mrs. McCrystal (69) for his office, the rug that turns to a "more or less Pakistan" one in Chapter Six (163).

The theme resurfaces in 43.16 ("some ancient city full of injustice"). Cf. also 190.24 (a "cream-colored house" which Pnin mistook for the Turkish Consulate).

Peter Lubin erroneously supposes that this telephone digression is as purposefully irrelevant as Gogol's *vprochem* [otherwise] device, a reference to Nabokov's observation in *Nikolai Gogol*, p.78 (see *Lubin*, p.204).

31.20 Mrs. Fire

Pninish for "Thayer." One recalls that Humbert Humbert's address in Beardsley is Thayer Street.

31.29 O.G. Helm

This "Oh, gee" hails the mention of the first of the five Georges inhabiting this chapter (see Appendix A). Pairs well with Joan's favorite "Oh, gosh"—e.g., in the very next paragraph (32.1).

32.9 little explosion

The punning on Pnin's name continues (the "punctured tire" variety—see n. 26.24).

32.20 cracked ping-pong ball

For an expanded version of that quip in *PF* see n. 26.24.

32.21 I know him well, he is the brooch indeed

Another quotation from *Hamlet*:

> I know him well, he is the brooch indeed
> And gem of all the nation.
> (Laertes on Lamord, 4. 7. 93-94)

33.1 The evolution of sense ... nonsense

A slightly simplified version of the same wordplay occurs in *L*: "Do the Senses Make Sense?" (5).

33.5 a polished globe of copper

With some variations, this frequent simile is an almost obligatory part of any depiction of Pnin's aspect (cf. the opening passage of the novel).

33.13 po-amerikanski

See n. 8.21.

33.16 Left for Kiev in 1918

The daughter of the Russian theologian Lev Shestov, Mme Baranoff, in her recently published two-volume biography of her father, quotes a contemporary memoirist (N. Slonimski) who left Bolshevik Russia along Pnin's route:

> After the Revolution the torrent of refugees, littérateurs, musicians, people of quite different political hues, was headed for Ukraine, usually Kiev. In the fall of 1918 I made up my mind to leave cold and hungry Petrograd. (N. Baranova-Shestova, *Zhizn' L'va Shestova*, Paris, 1983, vol.1, p.160)

33.33 to make a long story very short

A good illustration of Pnin's notorious proclivity for embellishing his English with improperly used idioms. This particular one he has been using since at least 1942 (see 14.27).

34.3 Vandal College

This too obvious pun revolves, of course, around Pnin's inability to pronounce "w." But see 140.25 for a French ghost village called Vandel.

34.11 Don Cossack she had once met

This Cossack, a rather unexpected personage who does not seem to have any bearing on the plot, once again (see n. 25.25) reminds one of the Gogolian method of crowding a narrative with perfectly accidental characters mentioned in some remote offshoot of an especially ramified sentence to be left there dangling for good.

There are two more Cossacks in *Pnin*: Komarov's father (71.14) and the husband of Al Cook's housemaid (119.23); purely theoretically, Joan might have met either of them in Constantinople in 1919, where many

transient Russian émigrés (Nabokov including) spent some time before proceeding to drift westward.

34.14 teeth pulled out

The theme of bad teeth rambles from one Nabokov book to another. Besides numerous descriptions of various torments in the dentist's chair, this theme entails a thorough, and also recurrent, analysis of the dentist's waiting-hall hell, as well as the post-torture bliss. The former is best presented in an elaborate chapter in *Camera Obscura;* the latter, in *Pnin* (38).

About a year before Pnin's dental adventure, Nabokov had undergone a similar operation reported in several letters to Wilson; their wording resembles rather closely that of the corresponding passages in the novel:

> . . . and then may go for a fortnight to Boston—to have my dentist there extract the rest of my teeth. (*N-W*, 241 [May 5, 1950]);

> I have to go to Boston to have six lower teeth extracted. My plan is to go thither . . . then mumble back, toothless, to Ithaca . . . and return to Boston . . . to have a denture put in.(Ibid., 246)

For more parallels see n. 38.9.

34.20 Hoecker . . . Hunt

There are two German painters by the name Hoecker (Adalbert Longin, 1761-1841, and Paul, 1854-1910), but brief research has failed to link the mentioned work to either of them. On the other hand, among a few American paintings bearing that title the most plausible seems to be the "Girl with a Cat" by Paula Modersohn-*Becker* (1876-1907), while if, instead of changing one letter in the artist's name, one would tamper in like manner with the title, one would come up with the "Girl with a *Hat*" (1908), by E. C. Tarbell, or, even more to the point, with the rather well-known "Girl with the *Cap*" by none other than William Morris Hunt (1824-1879), reproduced in *Masters in Art*, vol.9 (1908) and displayed at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (where Nabokov might have seen it), along with his *The Belated Kid* (1857), mentioned in the passage under discussion and printed in Martha Shannon's *Boston Days of William Morris Hunt* (Boston:1923).

34.17 currents of air

Pnin obviously has in mind, but does not know the English equivalent of, the French *courants d'air*, the drafts that have been plaguing him ever since he came to America. See 36.21.

34.18 reflected in the silent looking glass

The rambling "Reflection" theme makes its charted quick appearance in the chapter.

34.30 No douche?

In both Russian and French the meaning of the word is limited to shower bath.

34.33 What price are you prepared to demand?

One of many Gallicisms informing Pnin's English.

35.2 nootrition

The spelling here and elsewhere is supposed to reflect Pnin's typical mispronunciations.

35.16 traces of the girl's childhood

For more such traces (unnoticed by Pnin but recorded by N—) see 65.6.

35.23 a couple of alarm clocks

The alarm clock theme continues (see n. 14.2).

35.24 seventy-four library books

Their number will increase almost exactly five-fold and reach 365 (a book a day) by Chapter Six, that is, about five years later (see 164.4).

36.22 rectangular old man

Hagen's hookedness is stressed more than once in the novel; see especially n. 155.33.

36.26 Zdrastvuyte ... spasibo

A series of stock Russian greetings [Hullo—how do you do—fine—thank you]. Cf. Nabokov's criticism of Walter Arndt's translation of *Evgenii Onegin*:

> Anything a little too far removed from the kak—vy—pozhivaete—ya—pozhivayu—khorosho [how are you—I am fine] group becomes a pitfall. (*SO*, 237)

36.28 tsarist colonel in mufti

During his long lecture tour in the fall of 1942, Nabokov collected and jotted down descriptions of several rather striking personalities he chanced upon; later he passed a portion of that collection to Wilson in a form much reminiscent of his finished prose thus storing away the raw material for future use. One of these characters appears to have found his way into *Pnin*:

> Dusky face, grizzled goatee, nice wrinkles, big ears,—prodigiously like a White Russian General in mufti played sympathetically by Emil Jannings... told me that when he went to England he was listed as a "Colonel" on the Channel boat... (*N-W*, 88)

In his introduction to the volume of their correspondence, Simon Karlinsky suggests (p.16) that most of this letter (No.45) was "put to such a good use" by Nabokov in *L* and *Pnin*; however, I could find no other trace of it in *Pnin* excepting, perhaps, a very faint one: "In the Pullman... two nice self-controlled unsmiling privates..." (ibid., 89)—cf. 8.24: "a soldier asleep in one [corner of the car]."

36.30 Ougolok

"Nook," or "Recess," or "Retreat," in Russian. See also 45.25.

37.16 come to Goldwin for good

Russian Department at Cornell is in the Goldwin Smith Hall named after the English historian who taught at Cornell from 1868 to 1871.

37.18 a real lake

Waindell has an artificial lake (see 9.19), while Cornell overlooks the magnificent Cayuga.

37.19 a Professor Pnin

For Pnin's academic replicas see p.148, 1.22 *et seq.*

38.6 perceive them through the prism of its expectation

This is one of the numerous secret references to the novel's intrinsic mechanism, which are imbedded throughout. Patterns can be observed aetiologically,—for example, upon deliberate rereading of a labyrinthine book, when the prism of expectation yields the expected while the loupe of thorough scrutiny brings out minute details of the narrative fabric. See *IN-*

IV. Pnin, curiously, forgets his important resolution on his way back from "the ordeal" and does not look "at anything."

38.8 flow of pain ... to investigate

This is the apotheosis of the "dental theme" in *Pnin*. The following excerpts from Nabokov's letters to Wilson seem to have been used, only slightly altered, in the novel:

> I was lying on my bed groaning as the frost of the drug gradually gave way to the heat of pain. (113)
>
> I have had 8 teeth extracted—howlessly [sic], but the pain *after* the drug stops acting is horrible. (44)
>
> My tongue feels like someboody coming home and finding his furniture gone... I am orally a cripple. (112-113).

See Karlinsky's footnote to Letter 64.

38.27 the new gadget

Cf. "I am now armed orally with a tip-top plap-plopping plate" (*ibid.*, 115). It is interesting to observe how Nabokov uses his correspondence with Edmund Wilson as rough drafts for his future works. For details see Karlinsky's introduction to the volume.

39.7 a stage and a performance

The metaphor is followed up in Chapter Three (66.10) where the tongue acts as a "Punchinello in the troupe."

39.13 Oliver Bradstreet Mann ... Krotki

Both the "venerable fraud" and the "anonymous drudgery" (see 10.30-32) are identified by name here. The textbook will be mentioned again in Chapter Three, and Mrs. Krotki (whose name, by the way, means "meek" in Russian), in Chapter Six.

40.1 washing machine ... intruder

It is worth noting that this list of Pnin's adventures at the Clementses' does *not* include the one Cockerell relates to N— in Chapter Seven (the electric fan almost landing, chopper-like, in the tub with Pnin in it).

40.19 Desdemona, the old colored charwoman

This casual reference to *Othello* is supposed to produce a black-and-white-negative effect similar to the one discoursed in n.50.26.

40.22 that man George is no good

One of the six Georges in the novel, not counting the Saint. Five of them dwell in this chapter.

40.27 secret and sacred

Yet another euphonic formula of the "pain and panic" sort. It also turns up in *EO* (ii, 403) and in *Ada* ("a sacred secret and creed," 409).

I also notice this playful phrase ("to pry and peer into their sacred secrets") in the splendid short story "A Revenant" [1936] by De LaMare, whom Nabokov seems to have liked and known well.

This passage marks the beginning of one of the novel's smoothest and most intricate transitions (Pnin's faux pas at the Clementses'—his relations with Laurence—the "gesture theme"—film—Betty Bliss—Pnin's matrimonial plans—Liza).

41.6 warm world of natural scholarship

Cf. *BS*:

> I esteem my colleagues as I do myself... because they are able to find perfect felicity in specialized knowledge... (52)

41.7 human solids ... human surds

Another one in the series of slightly paradoxical maxims scattered throughout the book. Both terms are mathematical; the latter approximately means irrational (the *numeri surdi*, "muffled" or rather "dull" numbers, as the medieval mathematicians used to call such imponderables as the square root of two) and goes back to Arabic (via Latin and Greek).

41.14 espace meublé.

Furnished space (or room), in French. Cf. *Ada*:

> Furnished space, l'espace meublé (known to us only as furnished and full space even if its contents be "absence of substance"—which seats the mind, too)... (504)

41.21 a legend or a religion

Bodenstein recruits this pair for his "Deceptive Constituents" list (see Appendix 7.4), suspecting "a legion" in the second place. The point of this escapes me, although I notice that "legend" could be erroneously used for "legion," as in Shakespeare's "he hath a legend of Angels" (*Merry Wives of Windsor*, 1, iii, 59).

41.27 mahnut', vsplesnut', razvesti

To wave, to "splash" (Pushkin would say *splesnut'*), and to spread (one's hands), respectively.

41.31 helpless passivity

The same "relinquishing" gesture occurs in 59.30. Its French counterpart is illustrated in *BS*:

> Paduk... had made a somewhat ecclesiastical and Gallic gesture of lassitude and disgust, raising both hands and letting them fall again. (129)

See also *EO*, iii, 19-20.

42.4 air picture of the stick

In Nabokov's short story "Conversation Piece, 1945" (1945) a similar Teutonic gesture occurs:

> ...and he shook his bent finger at me sidewise, German fashion, in facetious reproof. (*ND*, 143)

Cf. Eric Wind's pliable index's contortions (p.48) and especially Hagen's manipulations with his cane (see n. 165.1).

42.15 a handsome heel

Here the reader enters Betty's "speech zone," an old but relatively seldom used stylistic technique designed to make verbal characterizations without resorting to the essentially unprosaic dialogue. Betty's vulgar jargon rides in the flow of indirect narration lacing it for a short stretch without interrupting it. For more on "speech zones" (especially in *Evgenii Onegin*), see Mikhail Bakhtin's "Slovo v romane" (The Word in the Novel) in his collection *Voprosy literatury i estetiki* , Moscow, 1975, pp.72-233.

42.25 How fair, how fresh

Nabokov disliked Turgenev's *Poems in Prose* (1883), the collection containing the one about the roses. In his Cornell lectures, Nabokov says that "their melody is all wrong; their luster looks cheap and their philosophy is not deep enough to justify pearl-diving." (*Lectures-R*, 70).

42.27 Turgenev ... tableaux vivants

Cf. in Nabokov's lectures on Turgenev:

> Turgenev's personal life was not very happy. The great, the only love of his life, was for the famous singer Mme. Pauline Viardot-Garcia. She was happily married, Turgenev was on friendly terms with her family, he had no hope of personal happiness, but nevertheless he devoted all his life to her, lived whenever possible in their vicinity, gave a dower to her two daughters when they got married. (Ibid., 68)

Note Pnin's typically corrupt syntax ("... was made by the ugly, but adored by him, singer...") which pretty much follows Russian relatively flexible word order.

42.30 Madam Pushkin ... you annoy me

Pnin must have in mind here, no doubt, a footnote by Olga Smirnov to her mother's memoir, or rather diary; Mrs. Smirnov was Pushkin's St. Petersburg friend and literary confidante of sorts. The whole memoir is generally regarded unreliable and, by some, even partly forged (at least in its 1895 version). Here is the footnote in question:

> Once, when he was reading to my mother a poem which she was to hand to the Emperor that same evening, Pushkin's wife exclaimed: "Good Lord, Pushkin! how you bore me with your poetry [Gospodi, do chego ty mne nadoel so svoimi stikhami, Pushkin]. He pretended not to understand and replied: "Sorry, but this one you have not heard yet; I haven't read it in your presence." Her answer was characteristic of her ways: "This one or that, it makes no difference. You simply exasperate me with your poetry." The poet, slightly embarrassed, said to my mother who was biting her lips lest she should intervene: "Natalie is still quite a child. She has that impossible childish bluntness about her." He handed the poem to my mother without having finished reading it and changed the subject. (*Zapiski A. O. Smirnovoi*, St. Petersburg, 1895, p.181fn.)

Of course, Pnin might have remembered some secondary source (of which there are quite a few) containing that quotation. So might the hero of Nabokov's short story "That in Aleppo Once...":

> She liked mine [verse] though, and would scarcely have yawned as the other [i.e. Mrs. Pushkin] was wont to every time her husband's poem happened to exceed the length of a sonnet. (*ND*, 143)

42.32 in old age ... red noz!

The "moozishan's" name is Sergei Taneyev (1856-1915). Pnin greatly exaggerates that short-lived and one-sided infatuation. After the death of her seven-year-old son Ivan (1895), the desperate Countess, who was in her fifties, found some consolation and emotional refuge in Taneev's music. The composer frequented Tolstoy's Moscow house, and for a brief spell the Countess fell in love with him (unreciprocated, however, if only because Taneyev seems to have been immune to women's charms by nature). The entire incident has been related in Mme Tolstoy's diaries as well as in numerous memoirs by Tolstoy's sons and acquaintances.

43.3 Pnin had nothing against Miss Bliss. He liked her... but

A curious, though, perhaps, chance, association with *Evgenii Onegin* comes to memory. The line "No ia ne sozdan dlia blazhenstva" (Four:xiv, 1) was translated by Nabokov as "But I am not made for bliss." Punster Pnin certainly would not miss such a possibility.

Pnin's former wife shares with Miss Bliss her given name (Elizabeth).

43.8 The cat ... in a bag

The well-known English and Russian proverbs amalgamated (the Russian one goes: "The awl can't be concealed in a bag" [shila v meshke ne utaish']). Cf. n. 76.10.

43.16 almost fell

Pnin does fall down the stairs in Chapter Four. For the "Oriental City" theme see n. 31.6; it is finally resolved in 54.18 and echoed in 190.26.

43.25 There are some beloved women ... in the dark

N— relates his own memory of Liza, which becomes obvious only in the last chapter, despite various hints dropped elsewhere.

Cf. the following passage from *L*:

> There are two kinds of visual memory: one when you skillfully recreate an image in the laboratory of your mind, with your eyes open... and the other when you instantly evoke, with shut eyes, on the dark innerside of your eyelids, the objective, absolutely optical replica of a beloved face... (13)

44.12 not particularly well-groomed beauty

The remark quaintly but neatly echoes the one about the Soviet May Day gala gals: "handsome, unkempt girls..." (81.7).

44.15 limpid mermaid

The mermaid theme is steadily threading its way through Chapter Two, culminating at the very end of it (see n. 60.29).

44.22 the Aksakov Institute ... rue Gresset

Nabokov's favorite trick: a criss-cross reference to minor literary sources aimed at those in the know. Sergei Aksakov (1791-1859) wrote *A Family Chronicle* (1856) and *The Childhood Years of Bagrov's Grandson* (1858), two almost, but not quite, autobiographical novels about the Bagrov family. Nabokov used the title of the former as a subtitle for *Ada* and worked the latter title into its text (e.g., "Aksakov, his tutor, and Bagrov's grandson, a neighbor's boy...," 160). Jean Baptiste Louis de Gresset (1709-1777) was the author of a humorous poem "Vert Vert" (1734), a story of a parrot and two convents, admired by Pushkin (see *EO*, ii, 119). Nabokov himself did not care much for either the Russian chronicler or the French rhymester (see Nabokov's letter 250 to Wilson and the Onegin note above). Commenting on Letter 96, Simon Karlinsky proposes that all these allusions may "suggest the Franco-Russian ambience of Pnin's émigré existence" (*N-W*, 146).

There may be another, probably coincidental, literary connection here. Arthur Schnitzler's play *Der grüne Kakadu* [The Green Cockatoo], 1899, depicts the decay of the French aristocracy on the eve of the Revolution of 1789-1794 (they make a troupe of needy actors improvise for them a revolutionary mood). There are some thematic links with Schnitzler's *Liebelei* in which Pnin is said (in Chapter Seven) to have participated. Thus, one of actors (Henry) simulates, off stage, the murder of his wife's lover. The name of the "Philosopher," one of the play's characters, is, curiously, *Grasset*. For more on Schnitzler, see n. 178.1.

44.29 Dr. Rosetta Stone

This joke, based on semantic redistribution, is patently Nabokovian. Rosetta (Arabic "Rashid") is a town at the "Rosetta" (western) mouth of the Nile's delta. The famous Rosetta Stone (a basalt stele, c.195 B.C.) provided Jean François Champollion with the key to unscrambling the Egyptian cryptograms. The inscriptions are in hieroglyphic Egyptian, demotic, and Greek. It was found by Boussard, a French officer in the Napoleonic Army, in 1799, and is now in the British Museum.

Bodenstein maintains that the slab was "the object of numberless... far-fetched symbolic interpretations" (Appendix 7.11).

45.4 crystal globe ... snowstorm

Cf. "the miniature blizzards imprisoned in round crystal" (*EO*, i, 7).

45.7 love letter

This is precisely the letter published by N— in Chapter Seven, and it is he who preserves it in his "private collection." (W. Carroll misses this point and quite erroneously supposes that there are *two* letters sent to Liza by Pnin—see *Carroll*, pp.204-205).

45.8 recovering ... who is now—

The circumstances that led to Liza's suicide attempt are briefly reported in Chapter Seven; the "littérateur" is N— himself who now stops short of imparting the secret to the first-time reader.

45.12 Pnin—and a baby at once

Only in Chapter Seven does it become evident that it was N— to whom Liza had turned for advice regarding Pnin's proposal.

The baby (Victor) was not born until fifteen years later, i.e., after Liza had left Pnin.

45.19 St. Petersburg (courtesy Anna Akhmatov)

The motifs enumerated here do frequently sound in Anna Akhmatova's early books (there is a section in her *Rosary* [Chiotki], 1914, entitled "Verses on St. Petersburg"). For more details see n. 56.4.

Nabokov's untraditional way of spelling the poet's name is in keeping with his often stated view that surnames of Russian ladies should not retain the feminine ending in English, unless they be stage-names (see, for example, *Lectures-R*, 137fn.).

45.22 straightforward patron of the arts

One wonders if this suspiciously iambic phrase could not be an echo of Pushkin's diction; "straightforward" here sounds very much like Pushkin's favorite epithet "priamoi" in this particular and somewhat archaic sense of "genuine" (as in "dushi priamoe blagorodstvo" [the true nobility of heart], *Evgenii Onegin*, iv, 18). In fact, the line cited might well run in Russian as "i pokrovitel' Muz priamoi...."

45.25 Zhorzhik Uranski

This Zhorzhik Uranski resembles very much the minor Russian poet and critic Georgii Adamovich (1894-1972). Julian W. Connolly, in his note in *VNRN* (4, 35-37) correctly states that "Zhorzhik is a Russian diminutive of George" but then inaugurates a rather far-fetched and hardly relevant parallel between the Biblical Adam and the Greek theogonic Uranus.

Charles Nicol's interpolation (see *ibid.*, 36) seems more to the point: Nabokov's usage of the term "uranism," as witnessed in *Glory,* 97, *PF,* 102 ("dubbing my capital Uranograd," says Kinbote), or *L,* 17 (see also Appel's fn. on p.338), was quite established in both Russian and English special literature for designating male homosexuality (see, for example, Vasilii Rozanov's *Liudi lunnogo sveta* [The Moonlight People], 1906, or Havelock Ellis's *Psychology of Sex*, 1938). It cannot be gainsaid that this simple observation does indeed, as Mr. Nicol remarks, "strengthen the identification."

Adamovich had been V. Sirin's compulsive Zoilus for almost a decade in the 1930s, and Nabokov retaliated rather lethally by exposing the critic's partiality (he had been an ardent proponent of the "honest" diction of the so called "Parisian" trend of Russian émigré poetry) when, in 1939, he published his poem "Poety" [The Poets] under the *nom de guerre* "Vasilii Shishkov" which immediately earned Adamovich's praise. Nabokov then placed a short story entitled "Vasilii Shishkov," under his regular pseudonym, in *Poslednie Novosti* [The Latest News], the Paris émigré daily for which Adamovich wrote. The whole episode is epitomized in Nabokov's note to the poem in question in his collection *Poems and Problems*, p. 95.

Nina Berberova notes that Adamovich had been worked into *G* as "Christopher Mortus," a hapless and biased critic in the novel (see *The Italics Are Mine*, New York, 1969, p.532).

In the above-mentioned note, Mr. Connolly proposes that the two writers's opposite views on contemporary poetry might be relevant to *Pnin*'s plot (Liza'a "Parisian" poems etc.). However, Zhorzhik Uranski publishes his "shameless rave" of a review not so much because Liza's "lyrical ovipositing" pleased his literary tastes as because a champagne dinner at *Ougolok* satisfied his gastronomical ones—that is, not on principle but precisely because he lacked any, which makes the resemblance even more striking.

Professor Entwistle mentions a visit to the *Ougolok*—see 36.26.

46.10 taper dessus

To beat up, in French. However, in the slightly outdated French slang it has the rude connotation similar to "knock up," as in "... who'll knock her up any day now" (*Ada*, 157).

46.18 makes green and gray mirrors

An elaboration comes three pages further, when after Dr. Wind revelations the sea voyage turns for Pnin "from green and silver to a uniform gray" (49-50).

46.19 in South America

Dr. Wind eventually winds up in Ecuador (see n. 110.14).

46.26 sent Liza the last issue ... on page 202.

Pnin later displays the same touching and amusing pedantry (a bibliographic citation plus a corrected misprint) in his letter of proposal to Liza—see n. 183.25.

46.31 the Nansen Passport

This document issued before World War II by the League of Nations to stateless persons, many of them Russian émigrés, is mentioned with a similar sneer in many of Nabokov's writings. See, for example, *SM*, 276-277; *L* ("Nansen, or better say Nonsense," 29), and especially, "That in Aleppo Once..."

47.2 seven-month pregnancy

This fixes the month of Victor's birth as June, 1940.

47.3 kicked off her shoes

Pnin recollects this gesture with pain several pages later (see n. 54.17).

47.7 those days were... the happiest... permanent glow...

Cf. *Ada*: "His love for Ada was a condition of being, a steady hum of happiness..." (574).

47.14 relative of mine

Yet another seemingly casual parenthetic intrusion of the omnipresent Narrator.

47.20 vagitus

First cry, Latin.

48.3 on the third evening ... a game of chess

The following passage from "That in Aleppo Once..." is thematically and semantically connected with this episode:

> On the fourth morning of a long and dismal sea voyage, I met on the deck a solemn but pleasant old doctor with whom I had played chess in Paris. He asked me whether my wife was very much incommoded by the rough seas. I answered that I had sailed alone; whereupon he looked taken aback and then said he had seen her a couple of days before going on board, namely in Marseilles, walking, rather aimlessly he thought, along the embankment. (*ND*, 152).

If, as one suspects, this passage contains a Chekhovian undertone ("Lady With the Strangled Setter"), then it is further enhanced by the immediately following sentence, "if you write it, you had better not make him a doctor, as that kind of thing has been overdone." Surely enough, Eric Wind is a "doctor."

48.12 Wenn Sie so ... fliegt

An awkward lexical translation of the Russian amateur chess-players' jargon (literally, "if you [play] this way, then I [will play] that way, and [the] horse flies [away]). The German for the chess knight is *der Springer*.

48.14 entschuldigen Sie

Excuse me, in German.

48.17 fish moths

A primitive insect, also known as silver-moth or fire-brat (*Lepisma saccharina*, of the *Thysanura* family). It crawls across several other Nabokov's books: one of Lolita's Beardsley friends, Eva Rosen, has silverfish eyelashes (*L*, 192); a "silky silverfish" moves gracefully in "Cloud, Castle, Lake" (*ND*, 118); and it appears in *LATH* under a different petname ("that bathroom pest on the Riviera, the silver louse," p.34). See *Tammi*, p.337, fn.94.

48.20 meditation ... a wild move

Cf. Gaston Godin's chess-board manners: "Wheezing he would meditate for ten minutes—then make a losing move" (*L*, 184).

48.25 the armpit of Pnin's defense

The ensuing disaster is being rehearsed in chess terms. A similar parallel can be found in *L* (see *Appel-L*, lxx).

48.29 lifting his useful index

This gesture somehow reminds one of Pnin's demonstration in 42.4.

Compare also Wind's "vibrating index" (48.23) to the "dramatically quivering index" belonging to his Soviet counterpart in *LATH,* 218.

48.30 suggested a couple of beers at the bar.

The situation recurs in Chapter Six when Hagen suggests drinking "a last cup" with Pnin before proceeding to unveil the sad truth of Pnin's imminent firing (see n. 167.6). A few moments earlier Pnin was suddenly struck by an inexplicable likeness of Hagen and Eric Wind (see n. 162.24).

49.4 hypothesis in retrospection

The formula, with its possible chess implications (the "retrograde analysis" in problem composition) can be applied to the novel itself as a very important component of its design (see *IN-IV*).

49.7 Your health ... German nectar

In Chapter Six, Hagen, trying to "sweeten the pill" for Pnin (who is about to get fired), begins the breaking of his horrible news exactly the way his compatriot finishes: he drinks with Pnin and praises his punch. Pnin later automatically registers what seems to him a bizarre resemblance of Hagen and Wind (162.25).

49.11 put five long sensitive fingers ... lasse mich

Dr. Wind's first cousin, Dr. Shoe of *Conversation Piece, 1945* (1945), shares this gesture:

> He sighed, got up, trod upon my foot in passing, apologetically touched my knee with the tips of his fingers... (*ND,* 137)

Cf. also a curiously similar Hagen's pat (see n.168.28), and Betty's tap (n.152.14).

Lasse mich: leave me alone, German.

49.19 Let us finish

Excited Pnin loses whatever command of German he may have; he wants to say, of course, "let us stop—."

49.20 diese Koschmarische Sprache

A very funny Germanization of the Russian (and French, *cauchemar*) word for nightmare, *koshmar.*

49.24 pinned Pnin

We have here a punning alliteration ("proceeded to impress upon pinned Pnin...points") and yet another chess term, sprouting, no doubt, from the chess game played with the Frankfurter; to pin a chessman (or, for that matter, a moth about to be spread) means to render it immobile.

49.26 our child

See n. 55.12.

49.28 pregnancy being ... death wish

For Dr. Halp's equally profound theory see n. 183.28.

49.28 sublimation of a death wish

This Freudian pronouncement echoes the one made by Liza's psychoanalytic friends fifteen years before (see 45.12).

50.12 mirages in different deserts

A family bliss with Liza in a foreign land proved to be one of these mirages for Pnin.

50.14 all three of us

Three (and even two—see 51.33) make a "group" for Eric Wind. During her short visit to Waindell, Liza tells Pnin that Wind calls him Victor's "water father" (see 55.12).

50.24 December 1951

This remark helps to establish the approximate time setting of Chapter Two as early Spring, 1952; the Spring semester has already begun and there is still snow in the park (see 52.21).

In the *Psychoanalytic Review* for January, 1951, one can indeed find an amusingly solemn essay "Catharsis in Group Psychotherapy" by S. R. Slavson. The article reads, typically, like a good parody of that kind of work. See n. 91.16 for a lengthy quotation from it.

Nabokov, incidentally, once consulted an article in no. xxii of that journal for one of his lectures on Dostoevski: see *Lectures-R*, 107, fn. (the year ought to be corrected to 1935).

50.26 Dr. Albina Dunkelberg

This is a sampling of one of Nabokov's favorite onomastic games. "Albina" means white (fr. Latin "alba"), whereas "Dunkel" is German for dark (see also n. 40.19).

In *L* there is an oxymoronic psychotherapist "Blanche Schwarzmann" (7) [White Blackman], along with her negative-image double, "Melanie Weiss" (304). And *TT* has a Clarissa Dark, a psychoexpert, nightly monitoring erections of two hundred "jailbirds" (61). Appel thinks that, "to Nabokov, Freudians figuratively see no colors other than black and white" (*L*, 326). See n. 91.13 for another possible "Melanie."

50.32 Bernard Maywood

Another marginal Gogolian character—perhaps Liza's penultimate lover (see her casual remark, 57.17).

51.6 tension-releasing ... taking notes

This farcical scene is paralleled by the atrocious one in *BS*:

> ... now and then served as a "release-instrument" for the benefit of the most interesting inmates... Doktor Amalia von Wytwyl... from other *gemütlich* points of vantage, could watch the proceedings and take notes. (195-196)

See also *Ada*, 577 ("The Farce of Group Therapy in Sexual Maladjustment").

As usual, the "Freudian" and "Teutonic" themes commingle here to form a beastly farrago familiar to Nabokov's reader.

51.26 when George last night

George happens to be the name of Liza's latest paramour (see p.56), and of a few other minor characters in the novel—see *Appendix A*.

52.4 communicating liver

Wind's dreams are materialized in the beastly state of *BS*:

> We all belong to one happy community. It is all in the family now—one huge family, all linked up... (19)

I think I have traced this slightly odd liver image down to a quite plausible literary source. In an exchange with Mme Odintsov (in Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons,* 1861), Bazarov says:

> "At least, when society is set up properly, it will make no difference whatever whether a man is stupid or intelligent, evil or good."
>
> "Yes, I see [retorts Mme Odintsov]: *everyone will share the same spleen.* [my italics]
>
> "Exactly so, Madam."
>
> (*Complete Collected Works in 30 Volumes,* Moscow, 1981, v. 7, p. 427)

One will remember that Nabokov taught the novel at Cornell, and that Turgenev occupies a special place in this chapter (see n.42.45).

52.7 private sorrows

The whole passage sounds strangely Kierkegaardian; cf., for instance, the piercing words of Victor Eremita who says of his sorrow "what the Englishman says of his house: my sorrow is my castle. There are many who regard sorrow as one of the conveniences of life." (*Either/Or*, Princeton, 1971, vol.1, 21).

52.19 brown suit

This suit proves to be an unfortunate choice of which Liza will callously disapprove (see 57.30).

52.24 on her way back

If our topology is correct (see n. 8.33), then Waindell must be indeed somewhere in upstate New York. Liza visits Pnin on her way from Boston, via Albany, possibly to Buffalo, where her next husband lives—see n. 86.10.

53.4 Timofey, zdrastvuy!

Hullo, Timofei. Curiously, Nabokov's transliteration tends to reflect pronunciation (the word is spelled, in Russian, "zdravstvui," with the first "v" mute; cf. also 36.26). In his short story "A Forgotten Poet" (1944) there is "Astav'te starika" [leave the old man alone] (instead of "ostav'te").

53.8 She always felt hot ... sequence

These two sentences illustrate nicely one of Nabokov's remarkable and rather frequently used stylistic devices, which he himself, in his lectures on Dickens's *Bleak House*, calls "The and-and-and device." He does not elaborate but simply quotes two not particularly representative examples of it from Dickens; but in his own work he employs this syntax to create a very special intonation and rhythm. These serial *and's* connect the adjacent clauses in such a way as to separate each consecutive description from the preceding one by a syntactic and semantic hiatus. In effect the narration

quickly picks up speed and acquires a "fleeting," slightly gasping, diction, with a number of purely syntactic transitions incorporated in one long sentence (such cinematically sliding images are not supposed to make a perfectly logical sequence). On a larger structural level, the device is akin to what Peter Lubin calls "Three-or-four cola synaesthetic periods" (*Lubin*, 207).

Here are two from a great multitude of examples of Nabokov's use of this technique:

> They were all about to start and very eager and all that, and Clare had 'phoned for a taxi and her new silver shoes glittered and she had found her bag... (*RLSK*, 103)

> But I knew it was all hopeless, and was sick with longing, and my clothes felt miserably tight, and I was almost glad when her mother's quiet voice... etc. (*L*, 48)

See also the almost page-long example on p.155 of *L*.

In the Russian version of his *Conclusive Evidence*, *Drugie berega*, Nabokov altered the famous episode with Bunin in a Parisian restaurant, closing it with an unexpected and very Nabokovian tribute to the Russian writer who had died shortly before the book appeared. The following passage is a sheer feat of the "and-and-and" technique and an embedded parody of Bunin's style and imagery to which the suddenly accelerated narration definitely but imperceptibly grades:

> Subsequently we used to meet quite often, but always in the midst of other people, and somehow Bunin and I adopted a bantering and rather depressing mode of conversation, and we never really managed to talk about our craft, and now it is too late, and the hero leaves the house and walks through the inevitable park, and sheet lightnings flash, and then he rides to the rail-way station, and the stars glow ominously and wondrously on the mournful velvet, and a keen bitterish whiff comes from corn-fields, and in the infinitely responsive remoteness of our youth roosters carol the night.
> (*Drugie berega*, 244)

One will note that this particular intonation and syntax occur in Tolstoy's prose, especially in *War and Peace*; see, for example, the chapter depicting young Countess Rostov's first ball (ii, 17).

53.9 nu, nu, vot i horosho...

These "verbal heart props" mean, literally and roughly, "Come, come, everything's fine, it's all right now."

53.15 diaphanous scarf

This scarf, along with the fur coat and even the hot neck, Liza shares with Nina of "Spring in Fialta" (1938) whom she resembles in certain other ways, too. Cf. also Helene von Graun's "fur coat and scarf," *RLSK*, 170.

53.28 ducking and pointing

This characteristic gesture has already been mentioned in the previous chapter (18.29) and will be registered again in the last one ("a vigorous ducking and twisting..." 186.9). The Narrator methodically proffers his own observations in episodes he could not have possibly observed, thus reconstructing Pnin's past "retrogradually" (in the sense outlined in n.49.4).

54.6 palazzo

The Russian word Pnin most probably used here was "chertog"—cf. *Ada*, 149.

54.15 What a gruesome house

A series of Pnin's casual but painful disappointments of the day, begun in the cab, is in progress. The contrast between his eager anticipation of that reunion and its heart-twinging outcome is paralleled in *L* where the nymphet says of the bouquet Humbert Humbert "had composed of wild flowers" and gave her at the hospital: "What gruesome funeral flowers!" (245).

54.17 such familiar movements

She also kicked off her shoes when she came, pregnant, "back to Pnin" (to use him as a convenient means of transportation to America); see n. 47.3; cf. also 54.33-55.1.

54.18 aquarelle with the minarets

Joan Clements was staring at that very aquarelle as she answered Pnin's call (31.11); its oriental landscape brought in a digression on the artist's technique of rendering telephone conversations and the unexpected "ancient city" topic. It is picked up now and underscored in retrospect.

54.22 pretty awful friends

Does Liza count N— among them? After all, Pnin himself can not gainsay that they were, and still are, friends (see 170.1).

55.12 the water father

It may be a bilingual quibble (not intended by Wind, of course), since Wind most likely pronounced "water" the German way: 'vahter'—'Vater'—father. Since Liza is often compared to a mermaid, Eric's half-

joke acquires a strange aspect that he might appreciate professionally. See also 58.27.

55.14 rather juvenile rocker

Pnin happens upon another rocker, also undersized, in the house he rents in Chapter Six.

55.32 her hands now ... on her back

In an uncanny feat of clairvoyance, Nabokov reproduces here in detail the following description in the second volume of Lidia Chukovski's *contemporary* diary made public only a quarter of a century later: "Anna Andreevna is lying on her back, motionless, stretching her hands along her body," etc. *Zapiski ob Anne Akhmatovoi* [Notes on Anna Akhmatova], Paris, 1980, vol 2, p. 6.

56.4 Ya nadela ... imya tvoyo

The poem is a mosaic ingeniously composed of bits of Akhmatova's early lyrics, drawn mainly from her *Vecher* [Evening] (1912) and *Chiotki* [Rosary] (1914) collections. Her imagery (quaintly Russian Gothic), and diction (confessional and "bitter"), and the prevailing meter (limping anapaest) are faithfully imitated here.

"Ya nadela tyomnoe plat'e" [I have put on a dark dress] is a paraphrase of a line in the poem "Vse my brazhniki zdes', bludnitsy" [We're all revellers here and harlots] (1913):

> Ia nadela uzkuiu iubku
> Chtob kazat'sia eshcho stroinei
> [I have put on a tight skirt,
> in order to look more shapely]

"I shepchu [the *shepchĭ* in the text is a misprint] ya imya Georgiy—Zolotoe imya tvoyo!" evokes a line from the poem "Bezvol'no poshchady prosiat..." [The eyes are begging for mercy] (1912): "korotkoe, zvonkoe imia" [the short and resounding name].

By at least two accounts Anna Akhmatova read *Pnin* and was offended by the parodies of her poetry; both come from the Chukovski family. In a letter to his American correspondent, Kornei Chukovski wrote: "Anna Akhmatova found his (excellent, one admits) parodies of her early lyrics very annoying." (*Novyi Zhurnal*, New York, No.123, 1976, 122). And in her *Notes* referred to earlier, Lidia Chukovski thus relates the poet's reaction to the novel:

> Tonight's indignant topic... is *Pnin*... She did not like the book in general, and found it libellous as far as she was concerned. I do not like the book either, or rather, I do not find congenial the genius [*ne po dushe mne ta dusha*] that creates Nabokov's books; but is it really a pasquinade of Akhmatova? or perhaps a parody of her imitators? Hard to say. Anna Andreevna positively considers it a squib. (Ibid., ii, 382-383)

Lidia Chukovski then quotes Liza's poem, erroneously supposing that it comes from Mrs. Pnin's pre-war collection *Dry Lips* (See 184.4). Incidentally, several of Akhmatova's rather naive remarks on prose, reproduced in Lidia Chukovski's always meticulously accurate *Notes*, reveal her glaring inability to grasp either the principles or the mechanics of fiction, whether she discusses Tolstoy or Chekhov or Nabokov, which becomes all the more apparent when put *en regard* with her always subtle and insightful judgment of poetry.

Among Anna Akhmatova's other rhyming imitators in Nabokov's books the most consummate one is Alla Chernosvitov of *Glory* (like Nina of "Spring in Fialta," she resembles Liza in more ways than one).

For more allusions to, and parodies of, Akhmatova's poetry, see nn. 60.29 and 181.3.

57.7 She pronounced George as in Russian

That is, "Ghee-or-ghee." There are at least five other Georges in the novel, all but one of them—St. George—connected with Liza in one way or another—see *Appendix A*. One suspects that this George is the "man named Church" (86.10) whom Liza is about to marry.

57.9 c'est la vie, as Eric so originally says

In *LATH*, Dora, a Soviet woman, remarks, "C'est la vie, as the Germans say" (212).

57.24 Nu kakoy zhe ty dushka

Lit. "what a darling you are." In *BS*, Krug says "spokoinoi nochi, dushka (animula)" (171), the literal translation in parentheses being the Latin for the diminutive of "soul."

57.30 this brown suit

Liza's last dig crowns the unfortunate reunion, compounding, as it were, Pnin's misadventures in Chapter One and projecting them into Chapter Two. After all, one of the main attractions of his trip to Cremona was the fee of "extra fifty dollars" which he spent on the brown suit.

58.4 I don't believe it, but suppose

Cf. Chapter Five: "[Pnin] did not believe in an autocratic God. He did believe, dimly, in a democracy of ghosts" (136.8). The squirrel, whose "sinuous tendril-like movements" are noted in every chapter, appears immediately after that reptilian image of Liza's soul. If W. W. Rowe is right (I don't believe it, but suppose), and Mira Belochkin's ghost has indeed been reincarnated in this ubiquitous rodent, then the context might engender a peculiar theoretical problem that two of Nabokov's subsequent heroes (John Shade and Van Veen) tackle unsuccessfully:

> ... We give advice
> to widower. He has been married twice:
> he meets his wives; both loved, both loving, both
> jealous of one another...
> (*PF*, ll.569-572)

See also *Ada*, 585, and my note in *VNRN*, 15 (Fall 1985). One wonders whether the squirrel did not sidetrack Pnin's train of thought just as this extravagant paradox was about to cross his mind.

Cf. Conrad Brenner's shrewd observations on the matter ("creeping souls" etc.) in his introduction to *RLSK* (New York, 1959).

58.8 there is something in me and in life—

"... that keeps us apart," as Paul Grams completes the sentence (see op.cit., 201). This simple conjecture seems much too easy; howbeit, the important thing is that Pnin is again, as in the previous chapter, on the emotional brink of utter despair, and just as then, he again all but grasps the key to his life's pattern (the specific design of the book). Once again, the squirrel interferes, appearing before him either to divert his attention from that task, or, perhaps, to direct it to the recurrent pattern. Pnin does not realize it, unable to connect the past events into meaningful anthemia, but the attentive reader should.

58.10 human despair seldom leads to great truths

Another in a series of succinct apothegms in the book. Lev Shestov, a diligent longtime student of human despair, held quite an opposite opinion: "It is presicely the ruined man who is on the verge of a discovery" (N. Baranoff, op.cit., vol.1, p.120). A "simple solution of the universe" would be, let us repeat, that Pnin's universe is what N. Flynn calls "artifiction;" that Pnin himself is a character therein; and that although his despair and pain are real, he has nothing to fear, for even death is "but a question of style, a mere literary device" (*BS*, xviii).

58.19 with contempt

W. W. Rowe seems to assume that Mira's ghost, impersonated by the squirrel, disapproves of Pnin's unwillingness to shake off Liza's spell (see *Rowe-D*, p.64)!

58.20 began to sample ... water

Chapter One, the squirrel was sampling a reddish object which turned out to be a peach stone (25.1). On the whole, this second appearance of the furry creature in the novel carries more implications than on other occasions.

59.24 John

Pnin's mispronouncing Joan's name this particular way did not go unnoticed by Laurence (see n. 165.17).

59.30 'relinquishing' gesture

See the definition of the Russian verb 'razvesti' in 41.28.

60.20 "Impossible isolation," said Pnin.

It may be as much of a reply to Joan as to Pnin's own sad broodings (of the *solus rex* sort—see n. 86.15). Julian W. Connolly has indeed suggested that it is in fact a snatch of his interior monologue (*Connoly-P*, p. 199).

60.25 logic herself

Logic in Russian is feminine [*logika*].

60.29 wistful mermaid... pair of legs... all fish... Lermontov

Typically for *Pnin*'s composition, all local themes concur and converge at the end of a chapter, closing it like a drawstring pouch (see *IN-IV*: 2). Liza has been compared to a "limpid mermaid" (44.15), but Pnin is totally unaware of that and besides he cannot understand the "American humor" of N—. The Akhmatova theme is also there; her first collection [*Evening*] contains a poem which begins

> Mne bol'she nog moikh ne nado -
> Pust' prevratiatsia v rybii khvost!
>
> [I no longer need my legs:
> Wouldn't mind if they turned to a fish-tail]

Compositionally, Pnin's mentioning two Lermontov poems is anything but chance. The first one is "The Mermaid" [*Rusalka*, 1832, published in 1836]; the other, probably, "The Sea Princess" [*Morskaia Tsarevna*, 1841]. The theme of the latter (a ravishing nymphoprincess turned to a repulsive reptile when dragged out of the sea by a handsome prince, doomed to be haunted by second thoughts) seems to be especially promising in the context of Chapter Two (cf. Pnin's weighing the prospect of Liza's soul creeping over his in their tentatively mutual hereafter). Julian Connolly, who discusses this second poem in his article on *Pnin*, notes that

> . . . the Prince's discovery of unsuspected horror under a façade of seeming beauty finds a reflection in *Pnin* in the reader's discovery that under Liza Wind's "animated, elemented" beauty (p.44) lies a vulgar and insensitive soul. (*Connolly-P*, p.200)

The mermaid theme rings also in *L*, where sometimes an especially dense and persistent sound-play is designed to give the alert re-reader an advance warning of the plot's taking a crucial turn. The relatively plain-looking phrase, "millions of so-called 'millers', a kind of insect" (243) intensifies in the Russian version of the novel into a lambent multitude of swarming m's, l's, and t's:

> . . . maiachili milliony motel'nykh motylei, nazyvaemykh mel'nikami ne to ot "mel'kat'," ne to iz-za muchnistogo ottenka na svetu.
>
> [there mingled motley millions of motel moths called "millers," either because they "mill around" or perhaps because of the "millet" shimmer they have when lit. (NY: Phaedra, 1967, p. 222)]

One wonders if this image may not be a faint ripple coming from Pushkin's unfinished *Undine* (Nabokov published his craftily stylized conclusion to the dramatic poem in 1942*), for Humbert, who is revisiting the events immediately preceding Lolita's escape, is at once Pushkin's bereft Miller who had lost his daughter, and the Prince who truly falls in love with her only after that nymphet-mistress of his has become a water nymph.

See Appel's note on Andersen's *Little Mermaid* in this connection (390).

Cf. also *EO*, ii, 246, and "Time and Ebb": "My grandmother read me a tale about a mermaid who had acquired a pair of feet." (*ND*, 159).

To be sure, Pnin brings up Lermontov out of sheer scholarly scrupulousness, unaware of the poems' possible thematic links with the ongoing chapter of his story, which the allusive narrator so deftly composed.

*In *Novyi Zhurnal*, No.3, 1942, 157-62. Nabokov wrote Wilson about that enterprise of his: "The end I tagged on is in perfect keeping with the general ending of all legends connected with mermaids and fairies in Russia—see for instance Lermontov's "Rusalka." (*N-W*, 67)

For comic strips in Nabokov's work see Appel's note to *L*, 387-388.

61.20 Isabel and the Hagen child

They are mentioned together again in Chapter Six (158.30). Each girl deals Pnin, in one way or another, an ultimate blow (see *IN-IV*: 2): Isabel all but crashes into Pnin's (formerly her) room at the end of Chapter Three; and Hagen suggests, in a grotesque attempt to ease Pnin's anguish at the news he has just broken, that Pnin act in the "Dramatic Program" under his daughter's direction (see Chapter Six).

61.22 Waindell bells ... nofing, nofing!

Thus the chapter closes on the same image with which it began. The circle is complete, all subsidiary themes have traced their courses to an end, all major, "stringcourse," ones have been manoeuvred across the chapter. Pnin is left desperate and in tears and, therefore, less than ever able to pronounce the tricky English sound "th" in "nothing."

Chapter Three

New Yorker: The Chapter was entitled *Pnin's Day*, and published on 23 April, 1955 (that is, on Nabokov's fifty-sixth birthday).

62.1 During the eight years

Therefore, the year of the Chapter is 1953 (see also 69.7).

New Yorker: "five years." "Pnin had taught" was "Professor Timofey Pnin had taught Russian."

62.2 he had changed his lodgings

Speaking of the valuable observations Nabokov had collected while moving constantly from one rented house to another in Ithaca, N.Y., Alfred Appel notes that "these annual moves, however dismal their circumstances, constituted a field trip enabling entomologist Nabokov to study the natural habitat of Humbert's prey" (*Appel-L*, xlv). The same can be said of Pnin's habitats and landlords (the two novels overlap chronologically).

The composition of the chapter is once again circular: it starts with a lengthy description of Pnin's successive and, for one reason or another, uncomfortable lodgings, and ends when he is about to lose his first really comfortable one.

62.9 nobody really loves anybody

This rather unheralded lyrical note sounds also in Chapter Four: "I do not think he [Victor Wind] loved anybody."

The passage is a classical case of the "and-and-and" device which creates that special tense lyricism of diction (see n. 53.8).

62.12 Tsentral Park and Reeverside

An example of the technique of indirect characterization, in this case through Pnin's typical mispronunciations.

63.1 the bright pat ... slipped upon

New Yorker: omitted.

63.4 high brown porch
New Yorker: "high porch."

63.9 choosy
Edmund Wilson did not like this word and thought it was "vulgar"; see *N-W*, 310.

63.16 Ping-pong, Pnin?
Pnin, an incorrigible punster in his own right, misses the obvious pun on his name (cf. 32.20).

63.17 workmen came ... Pningrad
A team of workmen arrives to put up a fence blocking Humbert's view of Beardsley school's playground and then disappears for good (*L*, 181). One suspects that the same crew of "absurd builders" stalked Pnin from his "College Home for Single Instructors" (they reappear when he returns there later).
"Pningrad" follows "Petrograd" and such like models, *grad* being old and poetic Russian for "town."

63.25 Duke's Lodge, Waindellville
Apparently owned by Charlie Wells, the son of Bill Sheppard's mother's schoolmate (perhaps, the longest Gogolian string in the novel). See n. 107.27.

63.26 delightful kabinet
A study, in Russian.

63.28 legs of stone would grimly tramp
In his introduction to the Time Reading Program edition of *BS* (New York, 1964), Nabokov recalls that at the time of composing the novel he "lodged under an old lady with feet of stone and above a young lady with hypersensitive hearing" (xi). He reports a similar experience to Wilson:

> I put "compose" instead of "create"... because there was "creation" on the next floor, just overhead and stamping. (*N-W*, 42).

An all but identical twin to this description in *Pnin* can be found in a passage from "The Vane Sisters":

> . . . the woman above . . . used to drive me crazy by the booming thuds occasioned by what seemed monstrous feet of stone (actually, in diurnal life, she was a small dumpy creature resembling a mummified guinea pig). (*Tyrants Destroyed*, p.235)

63.31 Starrs . . . I am Christopher . . . Louise

This chameleonic couple, with slight variation in the spelling of their names, seems to appear again in Chapter Four ["Dr. Stern and his smiling wife (I am Louis and this is Christina)," 90.26], and in Chapter Seven ["Chris and Lew," 182.18]. "Stern," of course, is German for "star."

63.33 Dostoevski and Shostakovich

Nabokov frequently voiced his strongly unfavorable opinion of Fyodor Dostoevski, whose importance as a novelist he thought was inordinately exaggerated. In his *Playboy* interview (January, 1964), for example, he remarks that

> . . . non-Russian readers do not realize two things: that not all Russians love Dostoevski as much as Americans do, and that most of those Russians who do, venerate him as a mystic and not as an artist. He was a prophet, a claptrap journalist and a slapdash comedian. I admit that some of his scenes, some of his tremendous, farcical rows are extraordinarily amusing. But his sensitive murderers and soulful prostitutes are not to be endured for one moment—by this reader anyway. (*SO*, 42)

See also Nabokov's lectures on Dostoevsky at Cornell (*Lectures-R*, 97-137).

Dmitri Shostakovich, Soviet composer (1906-1975). In a letter to Wilson, Nabokov relates an amusing episode of his being mistaken by a student for his cousin the musician:

> "I want to tell you, Mr. Nabokov, how I enjoyed your article on Shostakovich in *Harper's Magazine*" I do hope Nicholas [Nabokov] is getting some wrong-addressed compliment, too. (*N-W*, 97)

New Yorker: "Speech Department" (instead of "Fine Arts Department").

64.11 until Mrs. Thayer's old mother

New Yorker: "until the old mother of Mrs. Thayer (one of the college librarians)."

64.20 van Loon and Dr. Cronin

Hendrik Willem van Loon (1882-1944), American biographer and prolific journalist. Archibald Joseph Cronin (born 1896), British novelist.

Educated at Glasgow University Medical School, he practised medicine prior to publication of his first novel, *Hatter's Castle* (1931).

64.21 ...present; they might be ...
New Yorker: "... present. They might be...."

64.23 buxom historical romance
The two literary genres Nabokov despised most outspokenly were the *biographie romancée* and the "historical novel." In his commentaries to *Evgenii Onegin*, speaking of the frightfully boring *Mathilde*, a novel (1805) by Sophie Cottin (1773-1807), Nabokov remarks:

> But this is nothing compared to the boredom induced by ... the luscious "historical" novels distributed among housewives by the American book clubs of today. (*EO, ii, 343*)

64.24 Garnett impersonating somebody

Constance Garnett (née Black, 1861-1946), English translator, who rendered into English practically the entire corpus of major nineteenth-century Russian fiction (including Tolstoy, Turgenev, Goncharov, Dostoevski, Gogol, and Chekhov). She learned her Russian from radical émigrés in London (Prince Kropotkin was one of her teachers). Her translations (some still in print) are generally regarded inaccurate, and Nabokov frequently criticized their numerous blunders.

64.25 Toulouse-Lautrec
Henri Raymond de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901), French "post-impressionist" painter and lithographer. His posters are mostly satiric sketches of Parisian night life at the end of the 19th century. As a parallel, see Van Gogh's reproduction on the landing of the Sheppard house's stairs in Chapter Four (108.14).

64.29 He had returned
New Yorker: "Pnin had returned."

65.1 was still renting
New Yorker: "was renting."

65.5 for more than a year

Pnin had most likely moved to the Clementses' house in December, 1951 (see Chapter Two).

65.6 he did not notice ... never would

Pnin is not very observant and, therefore, he cannot be an artist; N—, on the other hand, is, and he never fails to point out the difference to the reader.

65.11 1940

New Yorker: "1943."

65.13 Joan Clements had left ... too.

Isabel is about to leave her husband and will return home late that day thus terminating Pnin's pleasant stay at the house. Pnin ignores the clear hints Mrs. Thayer, Joan's cousin, drops when he visits the library (see p.74), and so Isabel's return, at the very end of the chapter, is a shocking surprise to him. The situation resembles that in Chapter Six, where Pnin learns that he will be fired just after he decides to buy the house he has been renting.

New Yorker: "Mrs. Clements."

65.19 that had not been discontinued

New Yorker: "that the Clements had failed to have discontinued."

65.21 It warmed my heart

A recurrent reminder of N—'s keeping close to the action; in every chapter he is in the wings of the stage or, rather, in the prompter's booth.

65.24 Duchess of Wonderland

A personage in *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), by Lewis Carroll, English writer and mathematician (1832-1898). Nabokov translated "Alice" into Russian (*Ania v strane chudes*, Berlin, Gamaiun, 1923).

66.5 Volume 18 ... 1940

This "Soviet Gold Fund of Literature" is an obvious counterpart of the "Literaturnoe Nasledstvo" [Literary Heritage] series, begun in 1931 and comprising more than 90 bulky volumes of literary and historical

materials. Nabokov had used vols. 16-18 (Pushkin, Moscow, 1934) for his research on *Evgenii Onegin*, and vols. 37-38 (Tolstoy, Moscow, 1939) for the commentaries to *Anna Karenin* (see *Lectures-R*, 224). The latter volume seems to be a close relation of the one Pnin carries about the campus in Chapter Three (see n. 73.28), and it seems likely that Pnin should have collected some valuable textual observations on *Anna Karenin* (he shares them in Chapters Four and Five) in the course of his reading of the volume.

One notes that the hero of *G* uses this facetious formula quite seriously: "Leave Pushkin alone: he is the gold reserve of our literature" (*G*, 84); or, in the Russian original: "Ne trogaite Pushkina: eto *zolotoi fond nashei literatury*" (*Dar*, 83).

66.10 tongue (that punchinello in the troupe)

Nabokov used another metaphor in a letter to Wilson (explaining his method of teaching Russian phonetics at Wellesley):

> ...your tongue ... rushes and crushes itself against your lower teeth—a prisoner dashing himself at the bars of his cell. (*N-W*, 96)

66.11 upon its overenergetic

New Yorker: "upon the jaw's overenergetic."

66.18 vowels he ... softened

This is either a slip or misconception, for vowels can hardly be softened.

66.19 I never go in a hat ... winter

A lexical translation of the common Russian expression ["Ia nikogda ne khozhu v shliape"]. In *A Modern Russian Course* by Birkett, referred to earlier, one can find the phrase "Ia noshu galoshi tol'ko zimoi [I wear galoshes only in winter, p. 203], which is an almost perfect linguistic turnabout with regard to Pnin's sentence.

Compare the whole passage to the following in *RLSK:*

> Sebastian's English, though fluent and idiomatic, was decidedly that of a foreigner. His "r's," when beginning a word, rolled and rasped, he made queer mistakes, saying, for instance, "I have seized a cold...." (*RLSK*, 48)

The latter phrase is a literal rendering of the Russian idiom ["Ia skhvatil nasmork"].

66.20 pronunciation of "hot"

New Yorker: "pronunciation of the adjective 'hot'."

66.25 "no" sounded positively Italian

New Yorker: " 'no' acquiring for the nonce the rounded orifice of a British or Bostonian 'o' in 'not'."

66.26 by his trick of triplicating

New Yorker: "by his Russian trick of duplicating." In the next line, "No-no" instead of "No-no-no."

66.28 I have only two paces from here

Yet another lexical rendition of a Russian locution ("tut vsego dva shaga").

66.29 any long oo

This is a take-off point in the imperceptibly smooth transition from the enumeration of flaws in Pnin's pronunciation to a would-be casual example in the series ("afternoon") to the cunning discussion of chronology and timing, which is the main theme of Chapter Three.

67.1 German "nun"

German for "now."

67.3 Tuesday ... we wonder

The reader by now knows that the year is 1953 (62.1; see also 69.7); the month (February) is named directly in 75.15; the day is a Tuesday. Query: which Tuesday?

Immediately following the inconspicuous transition from the amusing peculiarities of Pnin's English to the starting point of the chronological puzzle in question, there comes a reminder of what the re-reader is supposed to have known since 21.7, namely, that Pnin's birthday, by the Gregorian calendar, is February the 15th (he was born on *Tuesday*, February 3, 1898, Old Style). Later in the chapter, when Pnin picks up a Russian newspaper in the library, the reader cannot but make what seems to be the only rational conclusion—that the day must be indeed the 15th of February:

> ...he ... glanced at the news in the latest (Saturday, February 12—and this was Tuesday, O Careless Reader!) issue (75.15)

This conclusion may seem to be obliquely corroborated by a snatch of Pnin's dream ("a birthday party was in progress," 82.22). In other words, the "careful" reader should assume that the sad day Pnin failed to disentangle from the "motuweth-frisas basis" of his academic humdrum, the day Pnin's maker wanted him and the reader to single out, is Tuesday, February 15, the kind of a birthday that somehow launches melancholy thoughts about one's death-day.

On the other hand, however, the chronology of Chapter Three may well be a thoroughly prepared trap that, as in chess problems, simply *must* be tried before proceeding to the right solution. The unassailable fact is that February 15 in 1953 was not Tuesday, but Sunday.

In his Russian class Pnin wrote a date on the blackboard which "had nothing to do with the day this was in Waindell: December 26, 1829" (67.14). This "nothing," however, should be put to test. This is the day, we are told, Pushkin wrote down his poem "Whether I wander along the noisy streets," a lyrical piece about death, with several piercingly revealing variants in the fair copy not meant for publication (see n. 68.10). That was one of Pushkin's many attempts to foreglimpse, through the medium of his art, and perhaps render harmless that way, the fateful day by imagining one after another possible circumstances of his death. But as Pnin triumphantly tells his class Pushkin died on a "quite, quite different day! He died—," and since the chair Pnin was leaning against cracked at that point, his class never learned the day. Pushkin died on the 29th of January, 1837, Old Style, that is, on February 10th, New Style.

Now, February 10, not 15, was Tuesday in 1953; what the more or less careless reader may take for Pnin's birthday may be actually Pushkin's doomsday. I propose that Pnin all but told his class about Pushkin's death precisely on the 116th anniversary of it, without realizing the fact himself but getting, as he does so many times in the novel, very close to making an all-important connection. Later Pnin keeps brooding iambically over his own destiny, his unuttered thought still tuned to Pushkin's lilt: "In fight, in travel, or in waves? Or on the Waindell campus?" (73.32).

But if the chapter's day is indeed Tuesday, February 10, how could February 12 be Saturday (see 75.15) when it was, of course, Thursday in 1953?

A pedant might argue that an author is free to employ a calendar of his own style. "Pushkin's '1820' differs from the historical 1820" (*EO,* ii, 490). It does, but not in terms of calendar, for even an invented one should be free of internal incongruities. The closing date of the book happens to be February 15, 1955, a Tuesday in the novel as well as in the Gregorian calendar, and one and the same day cannot be a Tuesday in 1953 and again in 1955. Cf. also the following observation Nabokov makes in his lecture on

Jane Austen:

> The ball at Mansfield Park is held on Thursday the 22nd of December, and if we look through our old calendars, we will see that only in 1808 could 22 December fall on Thursday. (*Lectures, 12*)

There may be another explanation. Both dates, February 15 and 12 *were* (in 1953) Tuesday and Saturday, respectively, but by the *Old Style* (thus being actually February 3rd and January 31st). Did Nabokov make an intentional mistake, substituting one calendar for the other to camouflage the day not only for the hero but for the reader as well? There seems to be a hint at such a possibility in the text:

> Pnin never celebrated [his birthday] nowadays, partly because, after his departure from Russia, it sidled by in a Gregorian disguise (thirteen—no, twelve days late)... (67.6)

The slip is important: the difference between the two styles was 12 days in the 19th century and 13 in the 20th (see Nabokov's "Calendar" in his *EO* and especially his introduction to *SM*, 13).* If this is a deliberately implanted mistake then one perhaps can find a hidden vector pointing to it in 79.26 (see note). Nor should one completely discard the possibility of a simple oversight on Nabokov's part: in 1955, when the chapter was published, Pnin's birthday indeed fell on Tuesday; while reshuffling the entire chronology for the final version (which terminates in 1955) Nabokov might have forgotten to change the day. However, one must admit that Nabokov hardly ever allowed such mistakes to occur, and I doubt that he made one in this case. Whatever the answer, the themes of Pnin's birthday and Pushkin's death *are* thoroughly blended in the chapter.

For general chronology of the novel see *IN-II*.

67.4 Pnin's birthday ... 1898

New Yorker: "in the penultimate year of the last century" (instead of "in 1898").

67.8 thirteen—no, twelve days late

Quite a purposeful slip, Pnin's birthday being February 15—see n. 67.3. The New Style was adopted in the Soviet Union in 1918. That one day difference concerned Nabokov personally since he was born in the last year of the last century (on April 10, Old Style) when the Julian calendar lagged

* Cf. "A Busy Man" (1931), where one of this chapter's dominant themes, a calendar of fate, informs the whole story: "...he was born in the previous century when there were twelve, not thirteen, days between the Old Style and the New, by which he lived now." (*DS*, 177).

12 days behind the Gregorian, thus making his birthday fall on the 22nd, rather than 23rd, of April (see *SM*, 13).

New Yorker: the phrase is conspicuously absent which may be an oblique indication that the chronological pattern of the chapter had not been quite evolved by 1955 when Chapter Three was published.

67.10 existed mainly on a motuweth frisas basis

This formula, rather perplexing at first glance, was plain enough in the New Yorker version: "existed for the greater part of each month on a Montuewedthursday—Frisatsunday basis."

67.11 blackboard ... grayboard

In an interview, Nabokov recalls that he tried this simple pun in his class:

> It is strange to think that never again shall I feel between finger and thumb the cool smoothness of virgin chalk or make that joke about the "gray board" (improperly wiped), and be rewarded by two or three chuckles. *SO*, 294)

A somewhat similar pun is employed in *L*, 73 (blackmail—mauvemail).

67.14 nothing to do

This pronouncement may be deliberately misleading (see n. 67.3).

67.19 3:03 p.m.

According to the very reliable and thorough *Rukopisi Pushkina* [Pushkin's Manuscripts, by Lev Modzalevski and Boris Tomashevski, Moscow-Leningrad, 1937], the verso of the sheet with the poem has "3 hours (and) 5 m(inutes)" (p.49). The text of the MS was first published, inaccurately, and reproduced by Ilia Zilbershtein in his *Iz bumag Pushkina* [From Pushkin's Manuscripts], Moscow, 1926.

67.20 Backman ... Walsh

Pnin's tiny class is listed here in alphabetical order. The important class roster in *L* has been thoroughly explicated by Alfred Appel (*L*, 359ff).

Frank Carroll, the head janitor's son and Pnin's "only talented student" is mentioned again in Chapter Six (148.1, where his name is repeatedly spelled "Carrol"). Marilyn Hohn, an "irresistible senior," later sells Pnin her old car (see 113.25).

67.25 the absurd Russian Grammar

In his letter to Wilson, Nabokov harshly criticized the "mimeographed copy of Mr. T[rager's?] Russian course" (*N-W*, 105) taught at Yale in the 1940s. The two other Russian grammars widely used on American campuses at the time were the *Beginning Russian*, by William S. Cornyn (Yale University, 1950), based, it would seem, on the course mentioned in the above letter, and the already mentioned (in n. 81.18) *Modern Russian Course*, which proves especially apt in connection with this chapter.

67.28 Whether I wander

One wonders why Nabokov should have chosen this particular verb when "roam" would do just as well without stretching the meter (cf. the end of n. 68.3). Cf. Nabokov's translation of another poem by Pushkin, "Whether I roam near tranquil waters" (*EO*, ii, 455). One possible answer is discussed in n. 82.21.

67.33 Ot Vladivostoka ... mil' .

"The distance between Vladivostok and Washington is 5,000 miles."

68.3 eight tetrametric quatrains ... tombstone.

Pushkin's preoccupation with prophetic numbers, as well as his numerous other superstitions, is recorded in many memoirs and in his friend Sergei Sobolevski's "Tainstvennye primety v zhizni Pushkina" [The Mysterious Omens in Pushkin's Life], first published in *Russkii Arkhiv* [Russian Archives], 1870, pp.1377-1388.

Curiously enough, the first line of the passage under commentary presents a queer example of a numerical play. In *SO* Nabokov admits that "in common with Pushkin [he is] fascinated by fatidic dates" (37). And the Narrator of *RLSK* says, "I cannot help thinking that there is an occult resemblance between a man and the date of his death" (183). Discussing Pushkin's poem *Tavrida* [Tauris] Nabokov notes that the MS preserves a series of dates in columns:

> Soothsayers affirm that a person cannot help writing the future date of his death in a hand that slightly differs from that in which he writes any other past or future date. Pushkin, whose concern with the fatidic was almost morbid, may have been trying here, on this April 16, 1822, to find out if his "22" was in some way different from the other dates he jotted down. (*EO*, ii, 128)

Nabokov has used Pushkin's sibylline poem in a very similar fashion in his Russian fiction. The hero of "A Busy Man" (1931) is mortally afraid that he should die on his thirty-third birthday. He exhausts his mind trying to forestall the manner of his end (thereby perhaps precluding inventive fate from going for that particular option). "Case number three: I am

roaming, say, through noisy streets," thinks Grafitsky, "aha, that's Pushkin trying to imagine his way of death: In combat, wanderings or waves // Or will it be the nearby valley. . ." (*DS*, 167). Later he recalls the closing lines of the poem's published version: ". . .to paraphrase Pushkin again, indifferent nature would be shining" (ibid., 170). And Sineusov, the frantic widower of "Ultima Thule," bitterly exclaims, "Indifferent nature—what nonsense!" (*Vesna v Fial'te*, 275).

Tammi makes the same observation (p.260, footnote 39; a misprint therein should be corrected: the poem was written at the very end of 1829).

68.10A 'will send me,' imperfective future, 'death'

Pnin, a "linguist by necessity," seems to mean the "perfective future" here, the Russian verb "poshliot" being perfective.

68.10B And where will fate ... body.

The quatrain in the original goes,

I gde mne smert' poshliot sud'bina,
V boiu li, v stranstvii, v volnakh,
Ili sosedniaia dolina
Moi primet okhladelyi prakh?

Like so many other late poems of Pushkin, this one has a number of important variants which the poet chose not to include in the published version. The first quatrain in the fair copy reads:

Kruzhus' li ia v tolpe miatezhnoi,
Vkushaiu l' sladostnyi pokoi
No mysl' o smerti neizbezhnoi
Vezde blizka, vsegda so mnoi.

[Whether I whirl amidst tumultuous throngs
Or taste of sweet serenity,
The thought of Death inevitable
Is always close to me and with me]

And the last quatrain in the draft, omitted by Pushkin in the published version of the poem, summarizes the poet's desperate attempts to envision the manner of his death:

Votshche! sud'by ne perelomit
Voobrazhen'a sueta.
No ne votshche menia znakomit
S mogiloi iasnaia mechta.

[In vain! The restlessness of fancy
Will not sidetrack my destiny.
But not in vain this lucid dream
Presents the grave to me.]

(Aleksandr Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* [Complete Collected Works], Moscow, 1937-1949, vol.3, part 2, pp.784-789).

The leitmotif "in fight, in travel, or in waves," which reverberates in Pnin's mind throughout the chapter (see 73.32), maintains in his translation the iambic rhythm of the original.

68.23 he died on a ... different day! He died—

Pushkin died on January the 29th, 1837, Old Style—or February 10, New Style, and that may be precisely the day of Chapter Three (Tuesday in 1953). See n. 67.3.

Oddly enough, Birkett's grammar contains the following sentence (designed to be translated into English by the students): "Pushkin umer v 1837 godu. Moi den' rozhdeniia vosemnadtsatogo fevralia" [Pushkin died in 1837. My birthday is February the 18th] (op. cit., 68).

68.27 (Sometime ... Berlin!)

Perhaps it is not Pnin but N— who strains his memory to make it speak. Such exercises in recovering the exact image from the depths of one's memory in the very process of taking down one's recollections are described in *SM*:

> I cannot recall the dog's name, and this bothers me ..... And now a delightful thing happens. The process of recreating that penholder and the microcosm in its eyelet stimulates my memory to a last effort. I try again to recall the name of Colette's dog—and, sure enough ... over the glossy evening sands of the past ... here it comes, here it comes, echoing and vibrating: Floss, Floss, Floss! (151-152)

See another example of this mnemonic effort in Nabokov's letter to a classmate (*Field-77*, 125).

68.28 clowns pulled out the piano stool ... seatless

In a sense, N— pulls out the academic chair from under Pnin.

Nabokov says, in a letter to Wilson, "you kick the Marxism stool from under the feet of Lenin, who is left dangling in midair" (*N-W*, 32).

69.2 and the Advanced that was trickling in

New Yorker: "and trickling in Transitional."

69.6 this was 1953—how time flies!

This cliché masquerades and at the same time sets off an important piece of chronological information. The Narrator seems to be prodding the "careful reader" to look up "the old calendars" in order to find out the exact date.

New Yorker: "Till 1952" (instead of "Till 1950"). "This was 1953" is absent (which could, of course, be the simplest explanation of the calendar discrepancy discussed in n. 67.3).

69.10 formerly had been

New Yorker: "had formerly been."

69.19 Mrs. McCrystal

A Vivian McCrystal appears on Lolita's class roster. "Vivian" is one of Nabokov's favorite cryptologues conveniently collapsing as it does into "V.V.N." (as in "Vivian Darkbloom," the password anagram in *L*). Amusing to note that "Mc" can be stretched (in both senses) to yield "Magic," thus "Magic crystal," Pushkin's "magicheskii kristall" (*Evgenii Onegin*, 8.l.13). Cf. also "Snowing in Fate's crystal ball..." (*Ada*, 8).

69.20 (1949-1950)

New Yorker: omitted.

69.24 ticonderoga-ticonderoga ... as we all must.

An apt onomatopoeic association: Ticonderoga is a village in Essex county in northeast New York State (about 88 miles from Albany and fairly close to "Waindell"). Lead pencils and paper are manufactured there. The place is a historical site: originally a French fortress, it changed hands (French, British, and American) several times between 1755 and 1780.

In *IB*, a pencil serves as one of several chronometers put in Cincinnatus's cell: it gradually, and proportionately to his remaining days, decreases as C.C. uses it, and it remains tantalizingly unclear whether the nearing decapitation makes him write frenetically fast (and "death" is the last word he manages to jot down and cross out with the chubby butt of the pencil) or perhaps his writing hastens his (and the book's) end.

69.30 summer spent in Washington

New Yorker: "summer spent at a Russian friend's farmhouse." As has been noted, Nabokov reconstructed chronology in the final version of the

novel placing the episode at The Pines in Chapter Five (the summer of 1954).

70.4 Dr. Bodo von Falternfels ... thenceforth

This "imported" scholar haunts Pnin in his nightmare—see 82.25. He is to replace Hagen as Head of German Department, which would make Pnin's dismissal from Waindell all but inevitable.

New Yorker: "Thenceforth" (instead of "and thenceforth").

70.11 Where, however, Ornithology and Anthropology also lurked

A necessary preparation for the "Twin Theme" in Chapter Six in which Pnin fails to tell apart two professors he *thinks* are look-alikes, one in Ornithology, the other in Anthropology.

New Yorker: omitted.

71.6 magenta eyes

New Yorker: "indigo eyes."

71.7 Richard Wagner, Dostoevski, and Confucius

These were representative ingredients of a fashionable intellectual smattering which the Komarovs (with their Russovietophile, Oriental, and "mystical" leanings) have adopted. Cf. this triad with the one on p.9.

71.9 Lang's celebrated mural

See n. 9.23 and the episode Cockerell relates to N— in the last chapter (188.18).

71.14 Cossack's son, ... a death's-head's nostrils

New Yorker: "Cossack's son and the only other Russian on the Waindell faculty, ... simian nostrils."

71.19 Russki parties ... phony folk songs

A similar list of flat and insipid pseudo-Russianisms appears in Chapter One ("Mother Volga songs, red caviar, and tea," 10.15).

71.23 Russianisms; and after

New Yorker: "Russianisms. After."

71.28 Only another Russian could understand...
N—, for example,—see n. 188.8.

71.30 ideal Russia consisted of ... Dam.
Cf. Edmund Wilson's report of a gathering organized by an émigré semi-literary group ("Novoselie," The New Abode) in New York, in 1943:

> Practically the whole performance consisted of papers and poems glorifying the defense of Leningrad ... Everybody quoted *Mednyi Vsadnik* [The Bronze Horseman, a long poem (1833) by Pushkin, with memorable lines eulogizing St. Petersburg] like mad, sometimes quite *mal à propos*. The keynote ... was the oft-reiterated phrase: "Peterburg *tire* Leningrad" [Petersburg hyphen Leningrad]. (*N-W*, 95)

In the short story "Conversation Piece, 1945" there is a character virtually indistinguishable from Komarov (though much more grotesquely painted), the turgid Colonel Melnikov; here is his little monologue:

> The great Russian people has waked up and my country is again a great country. We had Ivan, whom his enemies called Terrible, then we had Peter the Great, and now we have Stalin. I am a White Russian and have served in the Imperial Guards, but I also am a Russian patriot and a Russian Christian. Today, in every word that comes from Russia, I feel the power, I feel the splendor of old Mother Russia. She is again a country of soldiers, religion, and true Slavs. (*ND*, 135)

Cf. also the remark made by Waindell President Poore: "Russia—the country of Tolstoy, Stanislavski, Raskolnikov, and other great and good men." (see n. 136.4).

To Nabokov, any such talk was a glaring example of *poshlost'*, of the vapidly dreadful variety.

72.2 American colleagues ... mimicked droll Pnin
A reference to Jack Cockerell, no doubt (see n. 188.8).

72.10 he found ... interpolations
Although in the ensuing brief exchange with Komarov Pnin refrains from correcting him, he later endeavors to consult a Webster about the right stress in "interested," which will prompt him, rather unexpectedly, to recollect the Russian version of a line in *Hamlet* (see 78-79), with some interesting consequences.

72.12 antikvarniy liberalizm
Antiquated liberalism, Russian. The translation is supplied in parentheses in the New Yorker version.

72.15 said Pnin.

New Yorker: "said Pnin, continuing, in Russian." Line 17 reads "students. And if" (instead of "students; and if").

72.21 Pnin moved his lips and lower jaw ... did not

Pnin, who has been said to rely chiefly on the "overenergetic motion" of his jaw when uttering English words (66.12), wishes to correct his compatriot's pronunciation but does not; since he is uncertain of the right stress he later looks up the word in the library (see 72.10 and 78.15).

Cf. the essentially similar grimace in Chapter Four, "He pursed his lips. He opened them—but said nothing" (107.5).

72.25 he could walk

New Yorker: "Pnin could walk."

72.32 he was eternally about to mount

The tree of the Gesture Theme in Nabokov's prose has a peculiar offshoot of frozen gestures and postures. A comical pantomime of immutable objects, especially statues, is a frequent feature:

> ... the raised hand of poor Theodor the Third who permanently wanted a lift or to go to a smaller place, teacher. (*BS*, 32)

> Frock-coated Pushkin, the right-side lap of his garment permanently agitated by the Nevan breeze rather than by the violence of lyrical afflatus, stands looking upward and to the left while his right hand is stretched out the other way, sidewise, to test the rain. (*LATH*, 211)

Alpheus Frieze's monument haunts Pnin in his brief nightmare (82.29).

73.5 Huligani

Russian for hooligans or ruffians.

73.9 Central-European-looking ... portfel'

A soft-sided, leather briefcase. Pnin "swings it rhythmically" much the way he did his cane in Chapter Two ("in the European manner," 38.2).

73.13 flock of pigeons ... wheeled across ... pale sky

The scheduled appearance of the squirrel in the chapter is preceded

and punctuated by a circular flight of pigeons which, along with the "mournful whistle" of a train, adds to the suddenly mounting atmosphere of general sadness pervading the second part of the chapter and culminating in the cinema episode. A flock of pigeons flies briefly through *RLSK*, too, with the same gray-and-white visual effect and the note of inexplicable gloom:

> . . . the birds wheeling across the sky. They settled among pearl-gray and black frieze of the Arc de Triomphe and when some of them fluttered off again it seemed as if bits of the carved entablature were turned into flaky life. (74)

73.17 skimpy squirrel . . . his tree

Unlike chapters One and Five, where the squirrel appears at the deepest point of Pnin's despair and in anticipation of a cathartic downslide toward the end of the chapter, here the emblem precedes the gradual generation of small frustrating events and sad thoughts that plague Pnin during "his day" (the unwieldy tome he is carrying about to no purpose; the pang of the recollection of his dead parents; the ludicrous Soviet movie which reminds him of the Russia of his youth, now dead, too; even Isabel's unforeseen return). It looks as if the "chattering" creature were trying to alert Pnin to something,—perhaps, to the hidden meaning of that fast-declining day, be it his birthday or Pushkin's death-day.

73.25 slipped . . . regained his balance

Pnin slips twice in the course of one paragraph, the second time dropping the burdensome volume.

A similar succession of convulsive gestures is described in Chapter Two, just before Liza enters the novel: "Pnin . . . slipped, and almost fell at their feet . . . but retrieved his balance—only to crash into the poker and tongs" (43.16). In Chapter Four he is less fortunate; after falling down the stairs he is hospitalized with a sore back (see n. 108.5).

73.28 snapshot . . . Lyov Tolstoy . . . too.

That photograph can be found on page 529 of the "real" *Zol. Fond Lit*, vol.37-38 ("L. N. Tolstoy") of *Lit. Nasl.* referred to earlier. It is subscribed "L. N. Tolstoy v Iasnoi Poliane"[Tolstoy in Iasnaia Poliana (his estate near Tula)]. The picture was taken at the beginning of this century and is preserved at the Tolstoy Museum in Moscow. Nabokov used the volume for his research of *Anna Karenin*.

The transliteration "Lyov" (instead of "Lev") reflects the correct pronunciation; Nabokov used it fairly consistently (see, for instance, *SM*, 316 [index]).

73.32 In fight ... Or on the Waindell campus?

Pnin's mournful broodings roll along Pushkin's iambic lines. Mrs. Nabokov, who collaborated with me on translating *Pnin* into Russian, suggested, mostly in jest, a paraphrastic version of these two lines:

V volnakh li, v stranstvii, v boiu,
Il' tam, gde ia prepodaiu?

[In waves, in travel, or in fight
—or on the campus where I teach?]

Pnin does not see that this is a special day and that his melancholy is not without reason. Nor does he seem to know that one of the rough drafts of the poem he cannot shake off all day contains a line almost identical to the one he made up (it follows "In fight, in travel, or in waves?"):

Strana rodnaia il' chuzhbina
Moi primet okhladelyi prakh?

[Will the native or a foreign land
Receive my cold dust?]
(Pushkin, op.cit., 787)

Cf. n. 68.10B.

74.4 had long ceased to notice ... students

Another "aging college man," John Shade, "had ceased long ago to memorize faces and names of students" (*PF*, 21).

74.13 Her mother ... first cousins

Mrs. Thayer (who, by the way, referred Pnin to the Clementses) knows of Isabel's imminent return and in the course of the ensuing exchange is trying to break the news to Pnin so that he can find another room. He ignores the warning (cf. n. 79.30).

74.25 could you maybe

New Yorker: "could you perhaps."

75.15 Saturday, February 12

This should imply that the day of the chapter is February 15, Tuesday, which was impossible in 1953 (see n. 67.3) unless, of course, the Russian newspaper retained the Old Calendar. February 12, 1953, was Thursday.

75.16 this was Tuesday, O Careless Reader!

Once again, I refer the careful reader to my n. 67.3.

There are many instances of similar invocations to the reader in *Despair* and particularly in *L* ("Reader! Bruder! [264]; "my learned reader" [59], etc.); in fact, Appel counts as many as thirty such interjections in *L*. See his shrewd observations on the matter in *Appel-L*, p.lxi.

75.17 Russian-language daily ... since 1918

The main (now the only) Russian émigré daily in America, *Novoe Russkoe Slovo* [New Russian Word] has been published in New York since 1910; according to its subtitle, it is "the world's oldest Russian newspaper." Its classified page is, perhaps, the world's most hilarious, and some of its bombastic advertisements seem to have been lifted from the pages of *Pnin*'s Chapter Three (or perhaps the other way round).

75.19 Dr. Popov

New Yorker: "A Dr. Popov."

75.21 music corporation ... Broken Life ... Chauffeur

In the March 7, 1953 issue of *Novoe Russkoe Slovo* a firm named "Stinson Records" lists, among other items, "Razbitaia zhizn', val's" [Broken Life, A Waltz] performed, it would appear, by Petr Leshchenko, a Russian émigré singer of sensual grammophonic romances. I could not trace in the surrounding issues the "Pesenka frontovogo shoffiora," a Soviet wartime ditty sung by Mark Bernes (1911-1969), a Soviet movie actor. Its text, sans the first stanza, can be found in the contemporary collection *Narodnye russkie pesni i romansy* [Russian Folk and Lyric Songs], compiled by Aleksei Chernov (New York, 1953, vol.2, p.367).

75.24 Gogolian mortician ... picnics

In the 1950s, every issue of *Novoe Russkoe Slovo* ran an advertisement for the Petr Iarioma Funeral Parlor, under the title "Russkii Pogrebal'shchik" [Russian Mortician] and over the grotesque motto "The best funerals at the lowest price in New York, the Bronx, and Brooklyn."

75.27 for non-drinkers (dlya trezvih)

These chance personages are "Gogolian" not only in their aspects but also literally, for the mentioned device of crowding fiction with detailed descriptions of quite marginal and often ethereal characters is patently Gogolian. This nightmarish list particularly reminds one of *The Nose*

(1836)—I have in mind the scene at a newspaper "expedition office":

> One [note with an ad to be placed in the newspaper] said that a coachman of sober habits was let for hiring; another, that a little used barouche, brought from Paris in 1814, [was offered for sale]; still another, that a house-serf maid, nineteen years of age, who practised laundering but was fit for other jobs as well, was released [for sale]; sturdy *droshky*, one spring lacking; a young, hot-tempered, dapple-gray horse, seventeen years old... etc. (Chapter Two)

New Yorker: "for *dlya trezvïh* (non-drinkers)."

75.30 with passionate and ridiculous lucidity

This is the second time in the novel that Pnin sees his dead parents (see 28.2 and also 132.17). His anguish is welling up almost imperceptibly, and toward the end of the chapter he weeps "unaccountably, ridiculously, humiliatingly" (81.32), as he does at the end of Chapter Two ("weeping quietly and freely," 58.22).

76.1 small, cheerfully lighted

New Yorker: "small, rather shabby, but cheerfully lighted."

76.4 controversy ... factions

There were a good many political groups of Russian émigrés in post-war America. Often impassioned and always bitter polemics among them were endless, and *Novoe Russkoe Slovo* served as the principal battleground for their rhetorical partisan clashes. I found at least three large articles of this kind in the issues between December 1952 and February 1953: Mr. Dvinov's "Politicheskaia liniia" [The Political Line], 11 December, 1952; Mr. Abramovich's "Otvet kritikam" [Reply to Critics], 27 January, 1953; and Mr. Dneprov's "O politicheskoi linii" [Concerning the Political Line], 11 February, 1953, all three closely resembling, both in style and tone, the stuff Pnin regales himself with. Pen-names such as "Dvinov" and "Dneprov" [after the Dvina and Dnieprv rivers] were much in vogue among Soviet "displaced persons," as they had been in the previous generation of Russian radicals, owing doubtless to the obvious dearth of natural Russian surnames derived from rivers' names but also to the vaguely romantic aura shrouding the images of Onegin and Pechorin.

76.6 "He wishes ... his shins

Attempts to locate the exact Russian proverb have proved unsuccessful. Vladimir Dal's *Poslovitsy Russkogo Naroda* [Proverbs of the Russian People], Moscow, 1957, does not list this one. The closest

adage obtained in Dal' was "Na grushu lezt'—ili grushi rvat', ili plat'e drat'" (p. 269), which can be rendered approximately as

> The point of climbing up a pear
> Is pears to pick, or pants to tear.

76.10 He who ... stone

A funny hybridization of two trivial English proverbs, "People who live in glass houses should not throw stones" and "To kill two birds with one stone." Cf. "The cat cannot be hid in a bag" (n. 43.8).

76.18 He contemplated ... Petite Histoire

French for history of daily life, mores, customs.

New Yorker: "Timofey Pnin contemplated."

76.23 blissful stage ... material

At the time of composing *Pnin*, Nabokov himself was at a blissful stage of his work on *EO*. In fact, only five weeks prior to the publication of Chapter Three in the New Yorker, Nabokov wrote Wilson, "I have greatly enjoyed all that tremendous research" (*N-W*, 292).

76.26 like a big nut ... mental meal

A somewhat squirrelian image.

76.29 lifting his rudimentary eyebrows

Cf. in *L*:

> ... my learned reader['s] ... eyebrows, I suspect, have by now traveled all the way to the back of his bald head ... (50)

77.1 John Thurston Todd

In Chapter Six Pnin rents (and wants to purchase eventually) a house "on Todd Road" (143.31). "Tod" means death in German. *Bodenstein* notes that "the bust of the dead man is appropriately placed (Thurston, homophonous *thirst*) on a *drinking* fountain" (see his Appendix 7.10).

77.8 magazines ... Sixties ... marbled boards

The 1860s, immediately prior to and after the Liberation of Serfs (1861), were indeed a tumultuous period in Russian letters and journalism, with fierce polemics between the "Slavophiles" and "Westernizers" reaching their most impetuous stage. Among the prominent literary magazines of the time were the liberal *Sovremennik* [The Contemporary], edited by the poet Nekrasov and journalist Panaev and closed by the government in 1866; the rather omnivorous but influential *Otechestvennye zapiski* [Annals of the Fatherland], edited by Kraevski; the conservative *Russkii vestnik* [Russian Messenger], published in Moscow by Katkov; the Slavophile *Vremia* [Time], edited by M. Dostoevski (the writer's brother), closed in 1863 and reopened under the name *Epokha* [Epoch], and many others.

In the Russian version of his memoir Nabokov recalls that his studio at Cambridge was crammed with Russian books, and "one could find there Melnikov-Pecherski as well as old Russian magazines in marbled boards" (*Drugie berega*, 226). On Melnikov-Pecherski see n. 77.16.

77.11 Russian classics ... Pushkin ... Zhukovski

The series was called *Biblioteka Velikikh Pisatelei* [Great Writers' Library] and was edited by Semyon Vengerov and brought out by the Brockhaus-Efron Publishing House in St. Petersburg early in this century. Several sets of similarly bound, green-boarded, black-spined, in-quarto volumes were published in the series: Byron, Molière, Pushkin, Schiller, Shakespeare (and this is the edition mentioned in 79.4). The six-volume Pushkin was put out between 1907 and 1915. Vasilii Zhukovski, Russian poet and translator (1783-1852), was never published in this series (though the Schiller and Byron editions contained many of his translations). What Pnin most likely has in mind is the *de luxe* edition of Zhukovski's works, in two volumes, issued by the huge Sytin publishing firm (Moscow, 1902), which somehow blended in his memory with those splendid tomes of the Vengerov series gracing many private libraries of the time.

77.16 Kostromskoy's voluminous work ... among them.

The rites described in this passage are recorded in numerous works on Russian folk customs. Dal's *Interpretative Dictionary* gives the following example:

> On the Descent of the Holy Spirit Day [Whitsunday] they uncurl the birch trees, toss the wreaths into the water, and if they [the wreaths] drown, it is an ill omen; if they keep afloat, a good sign.
>
> (op.cit., under "skhodit'," *to descend*)

Nabokov, too, had studied the Whitsuntide rites—see *EO*, ii, 300-301. One of *his* main sources had been a venerable four-volume work by Ivan Snegiriov, *Russkie prostonarodnye prazdniki i suevernye obriady* [Russian Popular Festivities and Superstitious Rites. Incidentally, the original quotation in *Eugene Onegin* (ii, 301, fn.) has a misprint left uncorrected in the second edition: "severnye" (Northern) instead of "suevernye" (superstitious)—a rare case of an insidious erratum being so perfectly plausible.], Moscow, 1837-1839. According to Snegiriov, the Green Week [*zelionaia nedelia*] mentioned in the passage under discussion was also called in Russia (especially in the western and southern parts of it, but also in the North) *Rusal'e*, in obvious connection with "rusalka," a river nymph (op.cit., pt.3, 127. See also chapter "Rusalki i Rusaliia," pt.4, pp.1-17). (See nn. 77.31 and 79.3.)

Another important source Nabokov mentions in this connection is Pavel Melnikov's (pseudonym Andrei Pecherski, 1819-1883) novel *V lesakh* [In the Woods], 1868-1875, especially the first chapter of Part iii, "wherein he describes some curious blends of pagan tradition and Christian ritual of the Kostroma and Nizhni-Novgorod provinces" (*EO*, ii, 301).

The passage in *Pnin* is all but a paraphrase of the above quotation which even has the name of the perfectly fictitious Kostromskoy reverberating in it. One learns that "Kostroma," besides being the name of the city in the upper Volga, was the cognomen given to a peasant girl in the Whitsunday rite in the regions of Penza and Simbirsk. Other maidens would carry "Kostroma" on a board to the river and there lay her down, in an obscure burial imitation—see Snegiriov, Op.cit., pt.3, 134.

An extensive bibliography on the subject can be found in a recent work (V. K. Sokolova, *Vesenne-letnie kalendarnye obriady russkikh, ukraintsev i belorussov* [The Spring and Summer Calendar Rites of the Russians, Ukrainians, and Belorussians], Moscow, 1979).

Ironically, "some of those enthusiastic but repetitious May-Day pagan rites and Floralian games ... are so dull to read about in anthropological works." (*EO*, iii, 6).

77.25 frog orchises

Sir Joseph Paxton, in his *Pocket Botanical Dictionary* (London, 1840), defines this orchis as *Gymnadenia viridis*, while another old herbal, *The Flowering Plants and Ferns of Great Britain* (London, 1854-1857), by Miss Anne Pratt, vaguely, but essentially correctly, classifies it as "Green Habenaria... sometimes called... Frog Orchis" (Vol.5, p.214). Modern taxonomy calls it *Habenaria viridis* Linnaeus (that is, "green reins," in allusion to the color and shape of the flower's spur), a green, sometimes tinged with bronze, orchis blossoming in mid-May.

77.31 mermaid tail

This is the clue to that "curious verbal association"—see 79.1 and n. 79.3.

78.3 When Pnin raised his eyes ... dinnertime.

Cf. in *L*,

> Raising a cold eye from book to clock in the positively sultry Beardsley College Library ... (190)

78.5 naked and tired eyes ... book spines

A somewhat similar "dissolve" effect is achieved in *BS*:

> ... the transparent tangle of cells that floats athwart an overworked eye, the lemon-pale double of the lamp ... would mysteriously travel across the turquoise landscape in the window. (166)

The "Reflection Theme" flashes again momentarily, this time scanning "bright book spines" (one of the local themes of the chapter). For its summary see *IN-IV*: 2.

78.13 "interested" ... Webster ... as he did.

Komarov was right after all (see 72.20), and Pnin, who believed that "interested" should be pronounced as it is in Russian (with the third syllable accented), now must reluctantly admit his error.

Sebastian Knight used to make the same mistake: "He misplaced the accent in such words as 'interesting' or 'laboratory'" (*RLSK*, 48).

The Webster Pnin consults is the *New International Dictionary, Second Edition, Unabridged*, which Nabokov owned. It is mentioned many times in *SO* (see pp.79, 251, 253, 258, 308).

For Pnin's (and Nabokov's) "traveling companion," Webster's *New Collegiate Dictionary*, see n. 20.25.

79.1 plila i pela, pela i plila

See *Shekspir*, S. A. Vengerov ed., St. Petersburg, 1903, vol.3, p.132:

> Neschastnaia, bedy ne postigaia,
> Plyla i pela, pela i plyla,
> Kak sushchestvo, rozhdennoe v volnakh.
>
> [The poor girl, ignorant of the disaster,
> floated and sang, sang and floated,
> as if she were a creature born in waves]

For other references to *Hamlet* see nn. 14.17 and 32.22.

79.3 Of course! Ophelia's death!

The "curious verbal association" is now resolved; cf. *Hamlet*, 4. 7. 166-67:

> That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream,
> There with fantastic garlands did she make ...

In the "Hamlet Chapter" of *BS*, a paragraph begins with "And then there was Ophelia's death" and closes with "willows, Orchis Mascula and a garland afloat" (100-101).

The "mermaid tail" by which Pnin was trying to catch the "verbal association" (see 77.31) proves to be a key metaphor:

> ... her clothes spread wide,
> And mermaid-like awhile they bore her up,
> Which time she chanted snatches of old lauds ...
> (*Hamlet*, 4. 7. 174-76)

One will note that the last verse is paraphrased in 77.24 ("then, singing snatches of ancient love chants ...") and parodied in 81.7 ("...unkempt girls marched in an immemorial Spring Festival with banners bearing snatches of old Russian ballads"). See n. 81.7.

This is another good sample of Nabokov's subtle thematic double take. While a simple "verbal association" leads Pnin to a little private scholarly triumph (which in turn evokes and intensifies his sadness), another verbal link, on a different textual plane and in a different associative chain, juxtaposes old Russian May rituals with the Soviet May-Day routine by dint of a pivotal hidden quotation from Shakespeare, given only in an inexact Russian paraphrastic version (a similar technique is employed in *PF* where some crucial hints are disguised as English literal renditions of Zemblan adaptations from the original English).

For the "mermaid theme" in Chapter Two see n. 61.5.

79.4 Andrey Kroneberg's ... Vengerov's ... edition

This is the edition (referred to in nn. 77.11 and 79.1) of Shakespeare's Collected Works in the *Biblioteka Velikikh Pisatelei* series, edited by Semion Vengerov, Russian bibliographer and literary critic (1855-1920). The five-volume set was published in St. Petersburg in 1902-1904. For the Antiterran Vengerov see *Ada*, 259.

Andrei Kroneberg (1814?-1855) was a Russian poet and translator. His rendition of *Hamlet* is hopelessly inexact, though at times enticingly mellifluous, as in that marvelous (not obtained in the original, however),

line, "plyla i pela, pela i plyla" (see n. 79.1).

79.15 Sad! ... the sad campus.
This "sad," repeated at close range, formally introduces the main theme of the chapter, the anquish which Pnin cannot explain rationally.

79.26 Something ... we have chosen to ignore.
The "Sadness Theme" is approaching its climax. As has been demonstrated in n. 67.3, what Pnin "half-heard in the course of the day, and had been reluctant to follow up" was not so much the series of his routine little misadventures (though he recognizes the last one only with the last sentence of the chapter) as his failure to sort out the two calendars and to make a connection between his birthday and the recurrent thoughts of death prompted by Pushkin's poem (and it might also be the day of Pushkin's death) but also by *Hamlet* (Ophelia's death). The gloomy mood later combines with a very painful sense of his lost and dead native land as he is watching the farcical Soviet movie.
The same theme of an overlooked message sounds in *BS*:

> The luminous pattern he saw assumed a strange, perhaps, fatal significance, the key to which was half-hidden by a flap of dark consciousness on the glimmering floor of a half-remembered nightmare. It would seem that some promise had been broken, some design thwarted, some opportunity missed—or so grossly exploited. (209)

Cf 23.32. As in the previous (and the following) chapters, Pnin gropes for, and almost finds, the key to the pattern but never actually gets a hold of it.

80.10 by intense ... Starr
See n. 63.31.

New Yorker: "by the intense."

80.13 President Poore ... community
For his other *mot juste* see 136.4.

80.17 in Pnin's lap
New Yorker: "in Pnin's lap as he sat in New Hall."

80.19 a hoydenish Drama major

Hagen's daughter is mentioned twice in Chapter Six (see n. 158.30 and especially 170.23, where Hagen asks Pnin to participate, before he leaves Waindell for good, "in the Dramatic program" in that same New Hall, under her direction).

New Yorker: "a homely Drama major."

80.22 ancient movie shorts ... night club.

Judging by the brief highlights supplied in the passage, the films are Chaplin's *Sunnyside* (released June 15, 1919), *His Prehistoric Past* (released December 7, 1914), and, less incontestably, *Caught in a Cabaret* (1914). The "staring scene," however, recurs so many times in those early Chaplin's shorts as to make it difficult to pick the right one; it may be, for instance, *The Fatal Mallet* (1914), though there seems to be no "hectic night club" in it.

The mammoth Mack Swain (1876-1935) was the Burly Bully of Chaplin's Keystone films (1914) and again after 1918.

Cf. in *RLSK*:

> Charlie Chaplin stiffly trotting away from the big wicked man and skidding on the street corner. (47)

In an interview with Alfred Appel Nabokov admitted that he, unlike Pnin, "enjoyed tremendously American comedy—Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd, and Chaplin" (*SO*, 163). His favorite films by Chaplin were *The Gold Rush* (1925), *The Circus* (1928), and *The Great Dictator* (1940). "However," continues Nabokov, "today's Little Man appeal has somewhat spoiled Chaplin's attraction for me " (idem). See also Appel's *Nabokov's Dark Cinema*.

80.30 old-fashioned, humorless Pnin

Cf. 61.7, "I cannot understand American humor even when I am happy," says Pnin.

81.1 Glupishkin and Max Linder

André Deed (1884-1931), Franco-Italian actor, known by his stage-name Cretinetti, Gribouille, Glupyshkin (not Glupishkin, an easy misprint in the text), all of them meaning Mr. Simpleton in Italian, French, and Russian, respectively. Max Linder (misspelled as "Mac Linder" in the paperback edition of *Pnin*), pseudonym of Gabriel Leuvielle (1883-1925), French actor and Chaplin's predecessor. Nabokov mentions "the French

actor Max Linder, a popular movie comedian," in *SM*, 158.

81.4 Soviet documentary film

The description that follows fits hordes of the look-alike Soviet newsreels of the time, e.g. the monthly series *Novosti dnia* [News of the Day—see n. 81.18], or *Po rodnoi strane* [Across the Native Land]. But there is one particularly typical example of the Soviet post-war production in the movie-export line (such films were distributed in the U.S. by the Soviet firm "Artkino" and run at the Stanley theatre in New York). The documentary was called *U.S.S.R. Today* (directed by G. Bobrov and S. Gurov) and was shown in New York City in Spring, 1953 (to pick among several almost identical choices the closest in time to Chapter Three). The quotations that follow are from the review published in *The New York Times* on April 20, 1953:

> ... a ninety-minute Magicolor documentary spanning industry, agriculture, education and art... The distributors have provided also a spectacular 30-minute dance subject titled "Folk Talent"... *U.S.R.R.* [sic] *Today*... comprises a sprawling contemporary canvas of Soviet activity... consistently picturesque and optimistic, in like proportion. The general flavor is one of radiant insularity... The decorous opening sequence depicts the Young Pioneers... Another... stresses agrarian endeavor in Bukhovina [sic]... Ashkhabad, capital of Turkmania [sic], is seen at play and work... The formidable Kazakhstan... Moscow itself... the subways, the sight of the quiet, orderly crowds traversing the... splendor of gleaming, immaculate passages...

81.7 unkempt girls marched ... Russian ballads

The "curious verbal association" that sounded so mournfully in 79.3 (see the note) now strikes, antithetically, a satirical note, only to aggravate Pnin's melancholy at the end. The "immemorial Spring Festival" is The First of May, the "Day of Working People's International Solidarity," one of the two major Soviet holidays. The "snatches of old Russian ballads" echo the passage Pnin was reading in Kostromskoy's book and later recalled as having read in the Kroneberg version of *Hamlet* ("plyla i pela, pela i plyla": "Which time she chanted snatches of old lauds ..."). These marching Soviet Ophelias, along with the comical scenes that follow, touch in passing upon the "Sovietophile" theme originated in 71.29, and all but create yet another verbal allusion in passing.

81.9 Ruki proch ... den Krief

The first two slogans mean "Hands off Korea," in lame Russian and French; the last two, "Peace Will Conquer War," in Spanish and German, respectively. In the German version, "den Krief" should be "den Krieg."

81.13 Tajikistan ... mountain pasture ... factory worker's family

In one of his interviews Nabokov derided the stock Soviet fare in a facetious row of Carrollian alliterations, " . . .farms, factories, forests in Fakistan—oh, lots of fascinating subjects" (*SO*, 98).

Tajikistan and Kirghizia, are Soviet national territories in Central Asia; the former sports the highest peak in the USSR, Stalin Peak (now The Victory Peak), 24,590 ft.

Ossetia, a Soviet "Autonomous Republic," lurks in the high mountains of the West Caucasus.

81.18 Moscow Metro ... Dynamo.

Curiously, some passages in G. Birkett's *Modern Russian Course* bear a striking resemblance to the episodes in that Soviet documentary. The excerpts below are given in literal English translation. The coincidence is so remarkable that one could have suspected Nabokov's getting his descriptions from this very source, had not all those ludicrous details been so stock and numerous.

The Moscow Metro

> You are making a delightful tour about the wonderful underground palaces of the capital. Hundreds of lights are reflected in the lacquered panels. [You see] staircases made of granite, marbled columns, exquisite chandeliers. Oceans of light flood the metro stations. You get off the coach and step on the escalator—the moving staircase that takes you up all by itself. Before you get outside you cannot help looking around. The columns, the galleries, the station halls—everything is carefully done in lighter tones reminiscent of Spring and Youth. (Birkett, 236)

The Daily News

> The crucial game for the USSR soccer championship is played today at the Moscow stadium *Dynamo*. The teams of the Moscow clubs *Dynamo* and *Spartak*, each claiming the title of the All-Union Champion, will face each other on the soccer arena.
>
> Forty copies of Charlie Chaplin's film "Modern Times" [1935] are being printed at the Leningrad Copying Factory, named after the First of May. The picture opens at the First Movie Theater in Moscow on July 10th. (Ibid., 134)

The *Torpedo* club belongs to the Moscow Automobile Plant "named after Stalin" (nowadays, after Likhachev). *Dynamo* is a sports-club of the Soviet police, secret or otherwise (formerly, the NKVD, now the KGB and MVD).

The burlesque point here is that this "Moscow's Electrical Equipment Plant" is also called "Dynamo;" hence the absurd play: Torpedo ("Stalin's Plant")—Dynamo (the Police Club)—Dynamo (the Electrical Plant where Stalin is nominated as a candidate from the Stalin Election District). The Stalin note twangs in Pnin's predormant mind (see 82.23).

New Yorker: "between teams called Torpedo and Dynamo."

81.29 Zim passenger model

"Zim," or rather, "ZIM" stands for "Zavod imeni Molotova" [The Molotov Plant], later renamed "Gor'kovskii avtomobil'nyi zavod" [Gorky Auto Plant]. The model GAZ--M12 was in production between 1950 and 1957.

81.31 I must not, I must not

Sometime prior to April 5, 1943 (witness Nabokov's letter to Wilson, *N-W,* 100), Nabokov wrote a poem (in Russian), "Kakim by polotnom. . . ," dated 1944 in *Poems and Problems* (p. 126). Here is Nabokov's English translation of it (first published in *Modern Russian Poetry,* edited by V. Markov and M. Sparks, London, 1966):

No matter how the Soviet tinsel glitters
Upon the canvas of a battle piece;
No matter how the soul dissolves in pity,
I will not bend,
I will not cease
Loathing the filthy, brutality and boredom
Of silent servitude.
No, no, I shout,
My spirit is still quick, still exile hungry,
I'm still a poet, count me out!

82.1 his tear glands . . . fluid

Chapter Three (as well as Two, Five, and Six) leaves Pnin in tears. The brimming grief becomes unbearable at the emotional peak of the chapter. It is also a thematic crest; all "drawstring" themes once again gather at the end. A seemingly chance—actually, carefully designed—association (Pnin's past, Pnin's dear old Russia, the recollection of which was prompted by a passage in Kostromskoy and by that preposterous Soviet movie; Pushkin's death, Ophelia's death, death and his birthday) is now complete and is to be presently reiterated—in fast motion, as in an old movie short—in Pnin's nightmare.

82.3 In a haze of sunshine . . . flowers.

Pnin, evoking the Russia of his youth on his way home and later lying in bed, succumbs again to that "sinking" sensation, something he experiences toward the end of practically every chapter in the novel.

82.7 racemose bird cherries.

This is the Russian "cheriomukha," *Padus racemosa* Schneider, which Nabokov, after a detailed discussion of the complicated taxonomical problems involved, suggested be called in English *racemosa* (see *EO,* iii, 9-12). Yet in *Pnin* he uses the more precise term. In *SM* Nabokov calls "cheriomukha" *racemose-old-world-bird cherry "or simply 'racemosa' as I have baptized it in my work on 'Onegin'"* (69). In his interview with Alden Whitman of *The New York Times* (1971), Nabokob regrets that

> none of [his] own coinages or reapplications appears in [Webster's Collegiate Dictionary,1970]—neither "iridule" (a mother-of-pearl cloudlet in *PF),* nor "racemosa" (a kind of bird cherry)... (*SO,* 178-179)

82.12 anachronistic lodgings

New Yorker: "achronistic lodgings." In 82.14, "his arm; the road..." was "his arm. The road..."

82.16 horses galloping ... tossing their silvery manes

This is but an animation of the still-picture of Tolstoy and the "long-maned horses behind him"—see 73.30. The device is clearly cinematographic and quite in keeping with the "movie theme" of the chapter.

82.19 two alarm clocks, one set at 7:30, the other at 8

The continuation of the Alarm Clock, or Warning, Theme set abroach in Chapter One (14.4) and resolved in Chapter Six (163.17).

Cf. in *RLSK* (Knight's rough draft):

> He was mortally afraid of missing to-morrow's event glory early train glory so what he did was to buy and bring home... not one but eight alarm clocks of different sizes and vigour of ticking... which he placed which made his bedroom look rather like a (39-40).

82.21 Komarov ... writing

This entire paragraph is really a roster of the chapter's local themes assembled here and displayed in rapid, lethargically logical succession by the Assistant Producer (see n. 82.27). There is Komarov, with his Sovietophilia and his guitar and his "Russki parties" and "folk" love songs ("Broken Life," for example). There is the "pallbearers—missed birthday—Stalin" association (he, incidentally, died less than three weeks later, on March 5, 1953), that has a parallel track along which Pushkin's mournful poem and Pnin's own gloomy ruminations roll all day. There is

Bodo von Falternfels, who shares the office with Pnin; Pnin briefly stops there after his class in which he discussed the day of Pushkin's death (his class has never found out exactly what that day was, but it may well be the very day "this was in Waindell"—see n. 67.3).

The transitions are narcoleptically absurd but at the same time they are unassailable in terms of their autonomous logic. There is one purely alliterative transition from Pushkin's "Whether I wander..." via "waves or Waindell" to "Wonderful." The last, incidentally, is also a pet word of another German character in the book, Hagen, who automatically translates his expletive "wunderbar" into English (see Chapter Six, *passim,* and n. 161.18). This "verbal association" might have influenced Nabokov's choice in rendering the line from Pushkin—see n. 67.28.

82.27 Pnin had all but lapsed ... bronze wheel

This is a dream within a dream, each enveloping and suffusing the other. The statue of Waindell's first president Alpheus Frieze seen by Pnin on his way to the library (72.31) suddenly sets into motion and almost creates yet another Pushkinian allusion in the last paragraph (see n. 83.5).

In his lecture on *Anna Karenin,* Nabokov has this to say about the dramatic technique of dreams:

> A dream is a show—a theatrical piece staged within the brain in a subdued light before a somewhat muddleheaded audience. The show is generally a very mediocre one, carelessly performed, with amateur actors and haphazard props and a wobbly backdrop. But what interests us for the moment about our dreams is that the actors and the props and the setting are borrowed by the dream producer from our conscious life. A number of recent impressions and a few older ones are more or less carelessly and hastily mixed on the dim stage of our dreams. Now and then the waking mind discovers a pattern of sense in the last night's dream; and if this pattern is very striking or somehow coincides with out conscious emotions at their deepest, then the dream may be held together and repeated, the show may run several times... (*Lectures-R,* 176)

83.4 fear and helplessness, toothless ... Pnin

The first pair parallels the "pain and panic" leitmotif of Chapter One. Pnin has again, as in every chapter before or since, reached the culmination of utter despair. Cf. in Chapter Six:

> He looked very old, with his toothless mouth half open and a film of tears dimming his blank, unblinking eyes. (172.27)

83.5 stomping upstairs ... breathing

This image produces a bizarre amalgam of the Pushkin and Statue themes in the chapter. In the finale of Pushkin's verse drama *The Stone*

Guest (1830-1837) the animated statue of the Commander comes, stomping, to take Don Juan to Hades.

83.8 In fact ... in time

Only this last sentence reveals and circumscribes the outer plot of the chapter: Pnin will have to leave the comfortable and hospitable house of the Clementses because they have brought their daughter back home. Thus the peripheral theme of Pnin's permanent homelessness comes full circle in Chapter Three which began with a description of his consecutive lodgings.

Here he is spared the crowning humiliation, however (as he will be at the very end of Chapters Six and Seven): Isabel does *not* enter his (really, her) room with "toothless, nightshirted Pnin" trembling inside—she is stopped by Joan just in time.

Chapter Four

In the *New Yorker* (15 October, 1955) the chapter had the title "Victor Meets Pnin."

84.1 The king, his father

This chapter, just as the three preceding, has a definite circular composition. When it opens, Victor is trying to put himself to sleep by making up a story about his Father the King who flees from the besieged palace. At the end, Pnin (Victor's "water father") in his own dream sees a sequel to that story.

Actually, both episodes are but hasty, rough replicas of the plot kernel of Nabokov's unfinished Russian novel, one chapter of which, "Solus Rex," was published in the last, 70th, volume (1940) of the *Sovremennye Zapiski* (Contemporary Annals), a Russian émigré journal, while another chapter, "Ultima Thule," appeared in the first book (1942) of the New York *Novyi zhurnal* (The New Review). Eventually, Nabokov worked that plot, with some alterations, into his *PF*. In an interview with Alfred Appel Nabokov observed that

> the boy at St. Mark's [a curious slip—see n. 93.7] and Pnin both dream of a passage from my drafts of *PF*, the revolution in Zembla and the escape of the King. (*SO*, 84)

The notes immediately following appose the most obvious twin-images in both novels.

84.1 a very white sports shirt ... black blazer

PF: "His [the King's] black blazer and white trousers..." (122).

The black and white onomastic collision is almost as frequent in *Pnin* as it is in *RLSK* (Albinos Black, Capt. Belov, Roquebrune etc.), with its clear chess segregation of color. See nn. 50.26 and 91.13.

84.7 St. Bart's School

See n. 93.7.

84.9 Copious spring shower kept lashing... streamed.

PF: "On that particular afternoon a copious shower lacquered the spring foliage of the palace garden..." (124).

85.4 almost two years

Victor entered St. Bart's in the fall of 1952, therefore, the chapter is set in 1954 (see n. 87.6).

85.5 The King decided... not to abdicate

PF: "Despite the hopelessness of the situation, the King refused to abdicate" (119).

The theme of (intermittent) rainshower runs across the chapter; it rains in Victor's troubled kingdom, and it rains through the last part of Chapter Four.

85.7 Orient express... gaped at... cars.

PF: "Who can forget the good-natured faces, glossy with sweat, of copper-chested railway workers leaning upon their spades and following with their eyes the windows of the great express cautiously gliding by?" (147).

The Orient Express, inaugurated in 1926, shuttled between Paris and Istanbul.

85.9 reflected in puddles

The chapter is an ambi-circular composition: Pnin's closing dream is reflected and diffracted in Victor's opening fantasy, and this very interesting, image-blurring puddle presides over the beginning and the end of the chapter:

> Auroral breeze wrinkled a large luminous puddle, making of the telephone wires reflected in it illegible lines of black zigzags. 110.28 (see note).

Cf. "the rain makes gray and green mirrors of Easter day," 46.18.

And it is exactly in the focus of Chapter Four's arc that Nabokov places a conjoining passage about Victor's optical studies—see n. 98.30.

An oblong puddle haunts the pages of *BS* as a distinct connecting theme.

85.13 decapitations and folk dances... started

PF: "There occurred every day disgusting outbursts of violence, arrests and executions, but the great city rolled on as smoothly as ever, the cafes were full, the splendid plays were being performed..." (119).

85.15 a cross... Trieste, Graz, Budapest, and Zagreb.

The spot at "the heart" of this cross is the town of Maribor, a Slovenian city in northwestern Yugoslavia, on the Drava river. It is a traffic junction connecting Austria, Italy, Croatia, and Hungary, and prior to 1918 it had indeed been an Austrian crownland (see n. 86.16 on "The King of Bohemia"). Maribor was an outpost of German language on the cultural frontier between the Germans and the southern Slavs, and this fact somehow befits Victor's Germano-Russian origin and, obliquely, one of the sources of his fantasies ("the residue of various family allusions...", 86.32).

Nabokov used Germano-Slavic linguistic amalgams in *BS* and *PF* (and in "Solus Rex").

Geography appears to be a recurrent motif of Chapter Four.

85.32 month (it was...

The New Yorker: "month (It was...."

85.33 The lilacs... bloom... dripping panes.

PF: "Persian lilacs in riotous bloom tumbled and tossed behind the green-streaming amethyst-blotched windowpanes." (124).

86.10 man named Church.

One wonders if that "Church" could not be the "George" of Liza's poem, with whom she was "co-operating" (57.5) at the time of Chapter Two (1952); in fact, one could surmise that Liza stopped at Waindell on her way from Boston to Buffalo where Mr George Church lived.

See nn. 52.24 and 57.7.

86.15 the king alone—solus rex

As already noted, Nabokov had intended "Solus Rex" to be the title of his last novel in Russian. Later, when he had completed *BS*, he toyed with that title again:

> My novel... is called (provisionally) "Solus Rex" (The [Black] King Alone)—a chess-problem term. (*N-W*, 169)

Instead, the term was saved for *PF* where the king of Zembla is said to have "had the amusing feeling of his being the only black piece in what a composer of chess problems might term a king-in-the-corner waiter of the *solus rex* type." (118-119).

Cf. Pnin's almost impulsive "Impossible isolation" retort at the end of Chapter Two (see n. 60.20).

86.16 Bohemian Sea, at Tempest Point... Percival Blake

The tailtip of a curious chain of interlinked English literary allusions, which proves that Victor (or N—who lent this fantasy to Victor) is an erudite reader indeed. The "Coast of the Bohemian Sea" happens to be a renowned case of Shakespeare's being at odds with geography. In *Winter's Tale* (1611) Antigonus says, "our ship hath touched upon the deserts of Bohemia" (iii.3). This would be impossible, of course, for Bohemia (a province of modern Czechoslovakia) lies strictly inland. "Tempest Point" is certainly a pointer to Shakespeare's next play, *The Tempest* (1612). (The latter connection was noted by Charles Nicol in his *Pnin's History*, p.204).

The slip was exploited and expanded by Sterne (whom Nabokov admired) in *Tristram Shandy* (1760-1767), in the episode where Corporal Trim is desperately trying to tell Uncle Toby the story of the "King of Bohemia and His Seven Castles" (Book VIII, Chapter 19). But every time he ventures beyond the preliminaries, the pedantic Uncle interrupts the tale. One of the uncle's comical interpolations comes in the following context:

> "The King of Bohemia... was unfortunate, and thus—That taking great pleasure and delight in navigation and all sorts of sea affairs—and there happening throughout the whole kingdom of Bohemia, to be no sea-port town whatever—"
>
> "How the deuce should there—Trim? cried my uncle Toby; for Bohemia being totally inland, it could have happened no otherwise—"
>
> "It might, said Tom, if it pleased God—"
>
> My uncle Toby never spoke of the being and natural attributes of God but with diffidence and hesitation—"I believe not, replied my uncle Toby, after some pause—for being inland, as I said, and having Silesia and Moravia to the east; Lusatia and Upper Saxony to the north; Franconia to the west; Bavaria to the South; Bohemia could not have been propelled to the sea without ceasing to be Bohemia—nor could the sea, on the other hand, have come up to Bohemia, without overflowing a great part of Germany..."
>
> (*The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, New York: Boni & Liveright, 1925, pp.455-6)

This peculiar literary-geographical problem is alluded to, *à rebours*, in 93.21, where it pleases God to make the Caspian Sea, for once, an outer one (see note).

Finally, one should not ignore *A Scandal in Bohemia*, a short story by Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930), published in his collection *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (London, 1892). Doyle picks up Trim's unfinished tale and makes a detective story of it (Holmes rescues the King of Bohemia from a delicate situation). The real king of Bohemia in Holmes's day was Franz Josef von Hapsburg, "Emperor of Austria and Apostolic King of Hungary"—the title that might suit Victor's imaginary royal father rather well (see n.85.15). The "omnibus edition of Sherlock Holmes" is said (in Chapter Seven) to have been pursuing N—for years (190.3). For more on this subject see Andrew Page, "Vladimir Nabokov: In

Tribute to Sherlock Holmes," *Baker Street Journal*, 24, no.1, 12-24.

The name Percival Blake is also a crossbreed of at least two literary sources. The courageous Englishman Percy Blakeney of *Scarlet Pimpernel* (see n. 86.27), who conceals his identity and outwits his opponents, may be one likely source.* Another is, of course, Perceval, the hero of an old European legend, whose name graces the title of the French epic poem of Chrétien de Troyes (fl. c.1150-1190), as well as the German "Parzival" of Wolfram von Eschenbach (d. c.1220). But Victor, no doubt, remembered him from *Morte Darthur* (1470), a collection and adaptation of the Arthurian tales by Thomas Malory (d. 1471), who made "Percivale" the son of King Pellinore. One of Victor's best friends at school is Lance ("Lancelot"), a hero of Nabokov's short story (1952) in which Arthurian knights and hyperboles are adapted to the story's imagery of cold outer space and warm inner space exploration.

A "certain commercial traveller Percival Q." is Fate's favorite protégé in Knight's second novel, *Success*. (Theoretically at least, Victor could have read *RLSK*).

Indeed, Victor is so well versed in English letters for his age (Malory, Shakespeare, Sterne, Conan Doyle, Emmuska Orczy, perhaps even Nabokov), that it is especially inapposite that Pnin, who later in the chapter expects to meet nothing more than an "average American lad," should buy him a soccer ball and a shallow book by Jack London.

Some of the names mentioned in this note appear also on the list of Nabokov's favorite reading as a young man, as he recalls it in one of his interviews:

> On another level, my heroes were Scarlet Pimpernel, Phileas Fogg, and Sherlock Holmes... Of these top favorites, several—Poe, Jules Verne, Emmuska Orczy, Conan Doyle and Rupert Brooke—have lost the glamour and thrill they held for me. (*SO*, 43)

86.18 to meet him in a powerful motorboat

Cf. *PF*: "A powerful motorboat had been prepared in a coastal cave near Blawick" (120).

86.24 Italian film... ruins

This film ought to be a potpourri of several movies of the "neo-realistic" race. Its most essential ingredients are probably *Ladri di biciclette* (1948), directed by Vittorio De Sica, which epitomizes much of the trend's starkness (hectic chases, elaborate slums, silent scenes, wistful close-ups, etc.), and, even more likely, Roberto Rossellini's *Germany Year Zero* (1949) made in post-war Berlin. The film's hero is a 12-year-old street-boy.

* Oddly enough, there is a work on the aforementioned story by Conan Doyle, entitled "A Case for Identification—in Bohemia," by T. S. *Blakeney*, of all names.

A contemporary review points out the "cold accumulation by the camera of sordid details... the endless background of ruined buildings [which frames a] foreground of scarred and ruined lives ... crowded dwellings, petty thieving, prostitution and vice ..." (*The New York Times*, 1949, September 20).

86.27 The "Scarlet Pimpernel," recently staged

The romantic novel (1905) by the Baroness Emmuska Orczy (1865-1947), English playwright and novelist, was quite popular at the beginning of this century. It is the story of a leader of the League of the Scarlet Pimpernel, a group of young Englishmen engaged in rescuing the innocent victims of the revolutionary terror in Paris. The hero's real name is Sir Percy Blakeney (see n. 86.16). The novel was dramatized by the Baroness in 1905, in collaboration with her husband, the Rev. Montague Barstow. It was also made into a film, directed by Harold Young and Alexander Korda (1935), with Leslie Howard as Percy Blakeney.

86.29 Kafkaesque story

Franz Kafka (1883-1924), whose novella *The Metamorphosis* (1915) Nabokov included for analysis in his lecture course on European Masterpieces at Cornell.

86.30 ci-devant

This French for "former" (in the sense obsolete) produces a funny little clash with the immediately following "avant-garde."

86.32 not least ... thirty-five years ago

Pnin fled Russia in 1919 (see 33.22), and this is yet another proof that this chapter's year is 1954. The "not least" is important, since it links Victor's "day-dreaming" with Pnin's nocturnal fancy at the end of the chapter (see n. 109.26).

87.1 these were the obvious sources

Could this "obvious" be a signal word? After all, Victor's fantasies can be traced to much less obvious sources besides those mentioned by N— (Malory, Shakespeare, Sterne) which are moreover disfigured or disguised (Percival Blake, Tempest Point).

87.6 He was now fourteen

Strictly speaking, Victor is not quite fourteen by Easter of 1954; Liza had been seven months pregnant with him in April, 1940 (46.32), so his birthday ought to be in June.

The New Yorker: "Victor was fourteen."

87.15 I do not think he loved anybody.

This sentence resembles the one near the beginning of Chapter Three: "and nobody really loves anybody" (62.9).

87.28 "the pond" for the ocean

Calling the Atlantic Ocean "the Big Pond" was a dreadful platitude even in the 1930s. There was a movie titled "The Big Pond" (1930) directed by Hobart Henley.

88.1 Laius... Jocasta... little Oedipus

The "Oedipus Complex" is the cardinal point in the Freudian theory of subconscious interpersonal family relations.

In Greek legend, Oedipus was a king of Thebes and son of Laius and Jocasta. The oracle had predicted that he would kill his father and marry his mother, and despite his sincere attempts to dodge the destiny, he finally fulfilled both parts of the prophecy. When he learnt the truth, Oedipus blinded himself in self-punishment; Jocasta hanged herself. The story inspired three of Sophocles's tragedies, *Oedipus Rex, Antigone*, and *Oedipus at Colonus*.

88.9 left Europe.

The New Yorker: "left Europe at the beginning of the Second World War.."

88.10 that in fact he would soon see Victor

This reflects the practical result of Liza's visit to Pnin in Chapter Two. Pnin *de facto* adopts Victor, just as he had been prepared and eager to do it *de jure* in 1940, before the boy was even born (see 47.16).

88.15 teaching a practically dead language

In the early 50s, Russian language teaching was in reflux in America, due to the political situation. In Chapter Six Hagen, explaining to Pnin

why he stands to lose his job, remarks that "political trends in America, as we all know, discourage interest in things Russian" (169.19). It was not until the notorious "Sputnik" puff (1957) that Russian studies were revived.

88.19 Bulgarian kings and Mediterranian princes

This is the essence of the vaguely Slavic association Victor lightheartedly makes between Pnin, with his Russian background, and the "Bohemian" royal father of his fancy.

88.25 Gray Squirrel

The inevitable appearance of a squirrel in every chapter of the book assumes here the shape of a picture postcard. Pnin grossly misjudges the level of Victor's intelligence and sends him an "educational series" of postcards.

The Gray Squirrel is the *Sciurus carolinensis*, endemic to North America.

88.29 "squirrel." ... "shadow-tail."

The word "squirrel" comes from Greek *skiouros*, via Latin *sciurus*. *Skia* in Greek means shadow, *oura*, tail. In a sense, it can be said that the creature's swift tail shadow skirts the pages of the book, inspecting as it were one chapter after another.

89.3 morbidly concerned with heredity... losing his mind

The veteran psychoanalyst, Aaron Joshua Rosanoff (b.1878), whose classical Test is mentioned elsewhere in this chapter (see n. 91.2), actually did write a book relevant to this subject, *A Study of Heredity of Insanity in the Light of the Mendelian Theory* (1911)—but then one surely can find a Freudian treatise relevant to any subject imaginable. In fact, while searching for possible sources for this note, I came upon a specific advice, based on analytic interpretation, on the course of action one should take upon seeing the Duchess of Angoulême in one's dream (see n. 90.4).

89.9 the bedside Dane

Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875), Danish poet and fairy-tale writer.

89.10 Lübeck cathedral

Lübeck was one of the three "free Hanseatic cities" of northern Germany. Incidentally, the Lübeck cathedral has a famous altar painting by Hanz Memling (see 97.33).

89.17 country pope

A Russian priest, especially on a village parish, was called, casually, *pop*.

89.18 Feofilakt Bogolepov

The name has a doubly clerical twang, *Theophilaktos* meaning, in Greek, "guarded by God," while Bogolepov is but a Russian calque of the Greek *Theoprepaes*, "agreeable to God."

89.20 Nikolay Lobachevski

Nikolai Ivanovich Lobachevski (1793-1856), Russian mathematician and Professor at Kazan University, the founder of non-Euclidian system of postulates in geometry.

In his Cornell lecture on Gogol, Nabokov remarks:

> He may be compared to his contemporary, the mathematician Lobachevski, who blasted Euclid and discovered a century ago many of the theories which Einstein later developed. (*Lectures-R*, 58)

90.4 avoided the human form altogether

That fact alone should have alarmed Victor's symbol-minded parents-researchers, since the so-called "Draw-a-Person" test is among the chief testing tools in psychoanalysis (see n. 90.29).

90.21 did not pick his nose... nail-biter

All of these are supposed to be, in Freudian psychology, manifestations of subconscious sexual disturbances.

Kinbote, in his note to line 929 of Shade's poem, quotes this solemnly rollicking passage from an actual book on psychiatry:

> By picking the nose in spite of all commands to the contrary, or when a youth is all the time sticking his finger through his buttonhole... the analytic teacher knows that the appetite of the lustful one knows no limit in his phantasies. (*PF*, 271)

For Kinbote's source (Oscar Pfister), see n. 90.24 below.

90.23 a radiophile

The New Yorker: omitted.

90.24 tested psychometrically at the Institute

The ensuing satirical description of various psychoanalytic techniques is what may well be the most detailed and vehement manifestation of the Freudian theme in Nabokov's novels. It demonstrates that Nabokov had sufficient knowledge of rather ingenious and special tests and case reports. He put this information to use in every novel he wrote after *RLSK*. Thus, in *PF*, Dr. Charles Kinbote quotes (verbatim) from Dr. Erich Fromm's *The Forgotten Language* (New York, 1951) and from Dr. Oscar Pfister's *Psychoanalytic Method* (New York, 1917)—see n. 90.21; see also p.369 of Pfister's book in connection with n. 89.3 (the "Duchess of Angoulême" dream).

My commentary avoids any discussion of Nabokov's treatment of psychoanalysis and Freud since the topic has been virtually exhausted in his interviews and especially in his introductions to the English translations of his Russian books. See Alfred Appel's synopsis of Nabokov's attacks on Freud in *L*, *PF*, *Ada*, etc. in his commentaries to *L*, pp. 353-54.

A cursory examination of several sources seems to suggest that, in his descriptions of psychiatric tests, Nabokov thoroughly blended the actually practised ones (the Kent-Rosanoff, the Rorschach) with slightly modified (the Godunov), and sprinkles it all with an international troika of sheer impostors (Fairview, Angst, Bièvre)—although in cases such as this one can never be quite certain. More serious research may, perhaps, unearth true sources of all the tests mentioned in *Pnin*, but after winning through the dense krummholz of various psychoanalytic books and referentia, I decided that I had earned a right not to trouble my head over "sources" any further.

The New Yorker: "at the Psychotherapic Institute where he and Liza worked. The tests were carried out. . . ."

90.26 Dr. Stern. . . Louis. . . Christina

This ubiquitous couple, here in German habits, appears in Chapter Three and Six as the Americans Christopher and Louise Starr "keenly interested in Dostoevski and Shostakovich" (63.31, 80.10, and 138.17), and as the British Lew and Chris in Chapter Seven (182.18). In 91.28 they go by "Lou and Tina," in keeping with the sticky-cloying way these psychometrists have with children. The names of the tests' inventors make a veritable hot-pot of extractions: Godunov and Rosanoff (Russian); Bièvre (French); Kent (English); Angst (German); Rorschach (Swiss). *Poshlost'* truly transcends ethnic boundaries.

The New Yorker: "(Christina) but...," instead of "(Christina). But...."

90.29 so-called Godunov Drawing-of-an-Animal Test

My primary source for this and a few other notes is the three-volume *Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry*, ed. by Dr. Benjamin Sadock et al., 3rd ed., Baltimore-London, 1980. In the first volume of that monumental work, one finds a meticulous description of the Drawing-a-Person Test, introduced in 1926 and "first used as a measure of intelligence with children" (p.954). And now for the incontestably Nabokovian touch: the real inventor's name is not Godunov (pronounced in Russian "Gud-oon-off"), but, oddly enough, W. H. Goodenough.

Boris Godunov (1552-1605) was the Russian Tsar allegedly implicated in the murder (1591) of the young son of Ivan IV, Prince Dimitri, who was heir to the throne. The story (as Karamzin presents it in his celebrated *History*) provided a basis for Pushkin's drama *Boris Godunov* (1825, published in 1830), and inspired such Russian authorities on Freud as Dr. Ivan Ablomikov, Prof. Ivan Ermakov, and Olga Krasilshchikov (see *Bibliography*).

90.31 Fairview Adult Test promptly sank...

I have had no luck tracking down this one. (It may be worth noting, however, that the word is a calque of Beauvoir, and Nabokov dropped several caustic remarks about the "existentialist" couple, one of which can be found on p.138 of *Pnin*, just above the "versatile Starr couple"—and, of course, a simple transposition of two consonants will make the latter name look and sound almost exactly like the name of Simone de Beauvoir's Nobelized husband. See n. 138.8).

The New Yorker: "next day promptly sank...."

90.33 What a shame... to co-operate!

The term "co-operate," applied specifically to psychotherapeutic "doctor-patient" relationship, is parodied in Chapter Two, where Eric Wind is the Doctor, Liza, the Patient, and "George," Liza's current lover:

> "I made Eric a complete report," Liza continued with a sigh. "And now he keeps assuring me he can cure me if I co-operate. Unfortunately I am also co-operating with George." (57.3)

The New Yorker: omitted.

91.2 Kent-Rosanoff... Association Test

The *Textbook of Psychiatry* thus describes the Word-Association Technique in testing children:

> The technique consists of presenting stimulus words to the patient and having him respond with the first word that comes to his mind. Frequently used lists have been presented by Jung (1918) and Kent and Rosanoff (1910) (op.cit., 952)

91.4 a Stimulus Word, such as... mushroom.

My source offers a slightly different series of "stimulus words":

> Rapaport et al. used a list particularly suitable for psychiatric patients; it included such stimulus words as "hospital," "gun," "suicide," and "doctor," as well as words with oral, anal, and sexual connotation (*idem*).

91.7 Bièvre Interest-Attitude Game

This is yet another example of Nabokov's subtle, sardonic game. Francçois Georges Maréchal, Marquis de Bièvre (1747-1789) was, in the words of M. d'Abboinry who knew him socially, "un homme à reparties comique... fameux dans les fastes de la plaisanterie du calembour, du jeu de mots... résolut alors d'en profiter et d'écrire." (Mme Réemy, *Dialogue de deux compères*, Paris, 1833, p.12). Bièvre is mentioned four times in Nabokov's *EO*, especially in connection with *Bievriana, ou Jeux de mots de M. de Bièvre*, a collection of anecdotes frequently consulted by Pushkin who called them *ploshchadnye*, "of the market place, ignoble" (see *EO*, ii, 217-218, and Index).

It is worth remembering that Nabokov's work on the commentaries to *Evgenii Onegin* ran parallel to his work on *Pnin*, and so some of his scholarly notes and findings might well have been relegated to the novel. The choice of a famous French punster and wit for the fictitious author of an absurd "word-play" test seems quite felicitous and makes a riotous contribution to *Bievriana*. See also n. 91.10.

But there is even more to the matter: by a singular coincidence (which reminds one of another, no less strange case of Nabokov's "clairvoyance"—see n. 159.1) the name of a very similar, but quite recent (1976), psychoanalytic test for children, *Benton Visual Retention* (called so after Arthur L. Benton, who wrote the chapter "Psychological Testing of Children" in the op.cit., vol.3, pp.2473-2483) folds nicely into the BE-VI-RE (or BVR, or Beaver) which is an easy anagram of our Bièvre.

The *Pnin* variety of the test, as described by Benton, is part of a battery of psychometric experiments children go through (p.2474); it is listed under the "Perceptual and Perceptuomotor" category, along with the BVR and Draw-a-Person tests.

The New Yorker: "Pressey" instead of "Bièvre."

91.8 afternoons

The New Yorker: "days."

91.10 dying, falling, dreaming... converge

A Freudian reader of *Pnin* should have no trouble whatsoever applying the "symbolic" words, suggested by the insidious "Bièvre," to the final passages of Chapter Four. In fact, the list seems to be composed in such a way as to provoke those amusing interpretations. For example, all the inhabitants of the Sheppard house *dream* at *night* in their respective *bedrooms*; Sheppard, before falling asleep, thinks of *dying* ("green damp churchyard"—here *funerals* comes handy) and of his relative killed by lightning (*cyclones*); and then he visits the *bathroom* and "brings down the house"; and Pnin is, of course, Victor's "water*father*," and he did *fall* down the stairs, and now his back is sore, and he may need an *operation* (after all, Tolstoy's Ivan Ilyich got cancer of the kidney as a result of a fall from a stepladder—see n. 108.9). And all the themes, including this one, do *converge* as the chapter tapers out, as they do in every other chapter of the novel—although that last point a Freudian will probably miss. I notice that in the *New Yorker* version the last word in the series was "cacuminous" (instead of "converge"), said mainly of the pointed top of a tree (a feast for the analyst), and one could point out that the cottonwood that had crushed Sheppard's cousin did indeed have a pyramidal top. See also n. 191.15.

Such an interpretation would be, of course, neither here nor there, but Nabokov might have installed a yawning trap, to which such an inviting possibility manoeuvres the blindfolded.

91.13 Augusta Angst Abstract Test... das Kleine... "darkness"

"Angst" is German for "fear"; it is one of the pivotal concepts in Freudism. According to Dr. Ilma von Blakov, Freud "unterschied *Realangst* vor Gefahren de Aussenwelt, *Gewissensangst* vor dem Über-Ich und *Triebangst* vor der Stärke der Leidenschaften (im Es)." (*Die Zeichentafel*, Leipzig, 1943, p.67). The most renowned woman psychoanalyst of the time was Dr. Melanie Klein (1882-1960), and it is entirely plausible that the name is embedded in the sentence 91.13: "Melanie" comes from French (and Greek) for "dark," and the German version of "the little one" (das Kleine) could be more than mere translation. See n. 50.26 for "Albina Dunkelberg" and the oxymoronic names of two female psychotherapettes in *L* (Blanche Schwarzmann and Melanie Weiss). Dr. Klein's contribution to the theory and practice of psychoanalysis includes works on such problems (here arranged alphabetically) as Anxiety ("Angst"), Death Instinct, Depression, Ego, Mourning, Oedipal Conflict, and Superego. She is the author of *The Psychoanalysis of Children* (1932) in which she postulates, among other

things, that

> projective and introjective mechanisms based on the internalization by the child of parts of the mother (breast, face, hands)... are essential for the building of the child's... embryonic superego. (Sadock, op.cit., vol.1, p.87)

Another noted woman psychoanalyst, Lauretta Bender (b.1897), invented the "visual-motor" Bender-Gestalt Test (1938), designed mainly for children.

91.16 Doll Play... bedroom.

In *Drugie berega* (published 30 November, 1954, less than one year before *Pnin*'s Chapter Four), there is a passage absent in either of the English versions:

> The cretinous and vicious Freudian tests—the doll houses with little dolls inside (Now tell me, Georgie, what do your parents do in their bedroom?). (258)

By an absurd and amusing coincidence, there does exist a test for children invented by a Dr. Doll:

> Although primarily intended for application to mental retardates, Doll's (1935b) Vineland Social Maturity Scale proved to be useful in the evaluation of nonretarded children with diverse disorders. (Sadock, vol.3, p.2473)

But the closest to our text and the most spectacular source my random plunges into psychotherapeutic literature could locate is the already mentioned work by J. R. Slavson, published in *The Psychoanalytic Review* (vol.38, No.1, 1951), an earlier issue of which Nabokov had once had a need to look up for his lecture on Dostoevski (see n. 50.24). Here are excerpts from Slavson's article appertaining to the test in question:

> In order to stimulate activity catharsis children should be supplied with appropriate materials and situations... Clay, water, fire, paints, brushes, dolls, mannikins, guns, soldiers, rubber darts, doll-houses and furniture that includes beds and toilet fittings, are among the equipment suitable for young children... Doll-houses that have a number of rooms with bedroom and bathroom furnishings are particularly valuable for children below school age. In his play each child reconstructs and refurnishes the "house" in a manner that reflects his particular preoccupations. One may place the child and the mother together, with the father in another room or bed. The latter [father, not bed. G.B.] is often left out altogether. Still another child places the father outside the house trying hard, but unable, to get in. Some children cause the father and the child-dolls to fall out of windows... The bathroom receives similar diversity of treatment, with the toilet bowl being the center of attention... (44)

Later in the article all kinds of "free-association" and "verbalization" tests are detailed, but we had better shift the center of our attention

elsewhere.

The New Yorker: "the child" (instead of "Patrick or Patricia"), and "he or she" (instead of "Pat," l.18). Also, "no bigger than a cupule" (l.21), absent.

91.27 But bad Victor would not play with Lou and Tina

For Louis and Christina Stern (alias Starr) see n. 90.27.

The New Yorker: "But Victor refused to coöperate." Also, "crossed out" instead of "struck out."

91.31 therapists

The New Yorker: "therapist."

91.33 Rorschach ink blots... seascapes, escapes, scapes...

Hermann Rorschach, Swiss psychoanalyst (1884-1922) and author of *Psychodiagnostik* (1921), devised a test (1921) measuring the "nonintellectual" traits of personality, based on the subject's interpretation of ten ink blots of "varying designs and colors." The test is included in Benton's smattering of "tests for children" (see above note) under the category "Personality" (op.cit., vol.3, p.2473).

The eight words Nabokov subjoins here make a nonsensical set of rhymes,

> Seascapes, escapes, capes,
> worms of imbecility, neurotic
> tree trunks, erotic
> galoshes, umbrellas
> and dumbbells,

which compounds the absurdity of the thing. The first three incrementally shrinking words, however, form a meaningful series designed, perhaps, to lure a Freudian once again into "analyzing" Pnin's dream at the end of the chapter ("one of those dreams that still haunt Russian fugitives. . . their escape from the Bolsheviks. . . fleeing through great pools of ink. . . beyond the hopeless sea"—see n. 109.26). Nabokov certainly believed that crude Viennese psychotechnology was utterly and grotesquely futile particularly when applied to the vaporous material of dreams. His own method entails the careful fitting of parts and bits of Victor's predormant visions to Pnin's dream—which, in turn, is but a rough draft of an episode in a totally different book (*PF*).

The Geography Theme shows its tailfin here. I chanced upon the following rich description of the Rorschach Test in this connection:

> A schizophrenic patient gave the response "terrestrial sex" to one of the Rorschach ink blots in which he had perceived one part of the blot as a penis and the rest as a geographical map. (Sadock, vol.2, p.1184).

(Cf. in Pnin's dream, "great pools of ink... his worried friend had gone home for a map" 110.19).

I have spotted, in a recent bookseller's catalogue (Barnes & Noble), this advertisement:

> *Rorschach's Test*, Vol. ii. By S. J. Beck, A. G. Beck. Central thesis is the function of time in psychological change. Describes growth variants and clarifies most test data. Presents samples of Rorschach test personalities. Includes the repeated protocols of the Orthogenic children. 399 pp. Pub. at $28.50. Now only $7.95.

Nabokov would have appreciated the depreciation.

92.3 Nor did... sketches... represent

The New Yorker: "Nor were... drawings... pictures of."

92.4 mandala... (in Sanskrit) a magic ring... Dr. Jung

Generally, a mandala is the conventional representation of the cosmos in Oriental Art, created by geometric shapes with images of a deity. Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961), Swiss psychiatrist and one-time disciple of Freud, made the mandala a symbol of "the effort to reunify the self." The term is derived from Sanskrit for "circle."

The name of a psychiatrist Mandalatov in *Ada* (344) stems from this term, and not from what Carl Proffer thought it did—see his "Ada as Wonderland," in *PROFFER*, p.270.

The New Yorker: ("in Sanskrit").

92.7 more or less

The New Yorker: omitted.

92.8 mangosteen

Fruit of the tree *Garcinia mangostana;* also the crystalline, bitter, carbonic principle found in its pericarp (cf. "the molecule of carbon, with its four valences," 92.10).

92.9 like Morphos

Morpho Fabricius, the name of several spectacularly iridescent, mostly blue, species of butterflies (genus Nymphalidae) endemic to the Amazon forests. In a letter to Alfred Appel, Nabokov mentions "variously blue *Morpho* butterflies of South America" (*L*, 405).

The simile remains abstruse to me, although Mme Anna Kolyszko, who has translated *Pnin* into Polish (Warsaw, 1987), informs me that the term has a place in psychoanalysis—and so it should, for it is one of the Venus's epithets.

92.16 thenceforth the Wind's little patient

The New Yorker: "Victor." In the next line "allowed" was "thenceforth allowed."

92.21 Liza... between two libidos

Libido, (sexual) yearning, is the supreme motivator of human behavior in Freudian psychology. In *L* Humbert Humbert makes two nice mongrels of the word, pseudolibidos (p.20) and libidream (56). And in his Russian version of the novel Nabokov renders these as *libidobeliberda* [libidobalderdash] and *libidosie* [libidossier].

The New Yorker: "Liza Wind."

92.25 Greek Catholic Church

The Russian Orthodox Church properly belongs to Greek Catholicism, which differs from Roman dogmatically. The usual term "Orthodox" is unofficial.

93.2 who proved to be a wise and gifted educator

The New Yorker: "who was a...."

93.6 St. Bartholomew's

The New Yorker: "St. Bartholomew's, in Cranton, Massachusetts. The great and jovial Bernard T. Maywood, head of the Psychotherapic Institute, and Liza's ardent admirer, was one of the most distinguished living alumni of St. Bart's, and it was he who arranged a scholarship there for Liza's boy..."

93.7 St. Bart's... Massachusetts

Nabokov's son, Dmitri Vladimirovich, had gone to "two exclusive New England schools, St. Mark's and Holderness" (*Field-77*, p.60). St. Mark's seems to have been sundered in *Pnin* into St. Bart's and St. Martha's, "the nearest girl's school" (86.28). A dozen years later they merged again in Nabokov's memory which for the nonce stammered: when interviewed by Appel in 1967, he said, "the boy at St. Mark's and Pnin both dream of a passage from my drafts of *PF*." (*SO*, 84).

93.8 on the outskirts of Cranton, Massachusetts

The New Yorker: omitted.

93.9 Its main building... gate.

Nabokov must have specially studied the school building and grounds during his visits to St. Mark's. Once he spoke to Robert Lowell about St. Mark's, which the poet had attended and "flabbergasted Lowell with the extent of his knowledge about the school" (*Field-77*, 262).

St. Mark's school was founded in 1865 by Joseph Burnett; it is in Southborough, Massachusetts, 23 miles west of Boston and 7 miles from Framingham (see n. 102.20).

Meticulous architectural descriptions abound also in Chapter Five (Cook's Castle, 123.8) and Six (Pnin's house, 145.1).

93.18 arc

The New Yorker: "curve."

93.21 St. Bartholomew... Pleistocene.

Bartholomew, or the son of Tolmai (in Aramaic), was, according to St. Matthew (x.3), St. Mark (iii.18), and St. Luke (vi.14; Acts i.13), one of the Apostles. Beyond this, little is known of him for certain. According to Greek menology, he preached in India Felix, but the Rev. S. Baring-Gould suggests in his *Lives of the Saints* (Edinburgh, 1914, vol.9) that it was probably Arabia Felix (p.255; cf. 99.3). Most scholars agree in fixing Albana or Albanopolis as the scene of the Saint's martyrdom, and 50-60 A.D. as the approximate date. St. Bartholomew is said to have been flayed alive by an Armenian Prince (or King) Polemius, then suspended on a cross and left to die, exposed to flies (*ibid.*, 257). A Byzantine Emperor removed the bones of the Saint from the island of Lipari in 508 A.D. to Mesopotamia. How they had ever reached the place remains a mystery for some, a miracle for others. The Armenian Prince had enclosed the body in

a leaden coffin and thrown it into the sea (the Caspian). "But marvellous to relate!" exclaims the Reverend, "the coffin floated like wood on the waves, and was wafted out of sight. More marvellous still, it sailed by sea all the way to the island of Lipari near Sicily" (*idem*; see also his fascinating, almost Sternian footnote on that page which is too long to quote here).

This geographical oddity presents a case *exactly* opposite to the Bohemian Sea story (see n. 86.16). Sterne picked up Shakespeare's mistake and made his character say that the completely landlocked country of Bohemia could not possibly have access to the sea (unless it should please God, argues Corporal Trim); now the entirely inland Caspian Sea becomes, miraculously, a gateway to the Mediterranian, thus reversing the matter inland-out, so to speak.

The relics of St. Bartholomew are enshrined in Rome, on the island in the Tiber named after him. His day is observed by Roman Catholics on August 24. The Vienna Missal (see below) contains an engraved picture of the Saint holding the flaying knife in his left hand and propping up the Scripture with its handle. A reproduction can be seen in Baring-Gould, where Nabokov may have found it, along with the information about St. Bartholomew. The assumption is also supported by the fact that Nabokov mentions "Vienna Missal," a designation nobody else seems to use except for the Rev. Baring-Gould, who did not bother to specify what he really had in mind. Out of several scores of editions I have examined, three missals seem to be plausible candidates for the title:

1. *Missale Romanum*... Antuerpiae, Christophori Plantini, 1585, only a *copy* of which is at the Österreichische National Bibliothek, Vienna (see the *British Museum Catalogue of Printed Books* under "Liturgies. Roman...," p.205).
2. *Missale Romanum*... Viennae, Pragae and Tergesti, 1758.
3. *Missale Romanum*... Vindobonae, Henrici Reiss, 1861, 1872.

93.31 Sursum.

In Latin, upward. *Sursum corda*, "Lift up your hearts," a versicle in the Roman Catholic liturgical rite.

94.1 their private Arcadia

Arcadia, a Greek rural region in central Peloponnesus served as a place of pastoral bliss for poets of yore. "Even in Arcady am I," says Charles Kinbote (*PF*, 174). As Wilson notes in a letter to Nabokov, the phrase originates in Virgil's Seventh Eclogue ("Ambo florentes aetatibus, Arcades ambo"), but Nabokov derived his reading of it from an essay by Erwin Panofsky—see *N-W*, pp.318-20; see also *EO*, ii, 322, and Index.

94.4 the fives courts

A British version of handball of sorts, with two or four players participating. At St. Mark's there were at the time "eight courts for fives, a game similar to handball" (Much of my information about St. Mark's comes from an old directory *Private Independent Schools*, Wallingford, Conn., 1947-1948, p.84ff). St. Bart's is a "school in the English tradition... very fancy," says Liza (53.20). Cf. in *RLSK*: "[Sebastian Knight at Cambridge] had played fives (whatever that may be) or some other tame game..." (46).

94.6 The three lower forms... dormitories... a master's room

St. Mark's had the same arrangement: "... the main building contains cubicled dormitories for the younger boys... apartments for ten unmarried masters..." (*Private...*, p.84).

94.9 Visitors could not help admiring... dislodging him.

The narration grades, imperceptibly and for a moment, into a quotation from the school prospectus (which Liza probably had with her during her first visit to St. Bart's) and as smoothly returns back to its tracks.

94.12 Julius... the world-famous... Schonberg

The brief appearance of the Schonberg brothers in the novel is a good example of that Gogolian device of the matter-of-fact denizening of fiction with totally marginal, never-to-be-mentioned-again characters. This Egyptologist Samuel Schonberg seems to be far-famed only in the world of *Pnin*. As Peter Lubin notes, "...those quick fictions that live and die between commas, the Aeolian harps in *L*, the Egyptologist Samuel Schonberg in *Pnin*, are akin to Gogol's bootophilic soldier and his other everlasting ephemera." (*Lubin*, 204).

The reference here is to the ending of Chapter Seven of *Dead Souls* and to Nabokov's discussion thereof in his *Nikolai Gogol*, p.83.

The Messina earthquake occurred in 1908.

The New Yorker: "Schonberg, the world-famous Egyptologist."

94.16 the Reverend Archibald Hopper... dislodging him

At the time Dmitri Nabokov attended St. Mark's (late 1940s) the headmaster was the Rev. William Brewster, who was replaced in 1948 by William Barber.

95.2 Hymn 166, "Sun of My Soul"

This is a line from a poem included in *The Christian Year*, a collection (1827) of religious poetry by John Keble (1792-1866), English poet and divine:

> Sun of my soul! Thou Saviour dear,
> It is not night if Thou be near.
> "Evening," lines 9-10

Incidentally, Keble was born on St. Mark's Day, April 25.

I notice that the verse in *Pnin* is really the *first* line of what is called the "Evening Hymn" in *Old Favorite Songs and Hymns*, ed. by Richard Mackenzie (Garden City, c.1946); in *Masterpieces of Religious Verse*, ed. by James Morrison (New York, 1948); and in *Beautiful Poems on Jesus*, comp. by Basil Miller (Kansas City, Missouri, 1948). One of these collections most likely was Nabokov's source, all of them published around the time Nabokov was making his field trips to St. Mark's.

95.15 but he revered Lake

The transition here serves to switch the narration from the description of St. Bart's to Mr. Lake, the Art teacher, and to the theme of painting, painters, reflection, and diffraction.

95.17 somber embarrassment... rosy-cheeked lads

Lake is a chance mannequin in Nabokov's gallery of homophilic characters. The concurrent exemplar is Gaston Godin of *L*, and both are antetypes of the grand portrait of Charles the Beloved (1915-1959), the last King of Zembla and hero of *PF*.

95.23 Käsebier

Gertrude Käsebier, American pictorial photographer (1852-1934).

95.27 Rembrandt's "The Pilgrims of Emmaus"

Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn (1606-1669), Dutch painter. "The Pilgrims of Emmaus" (1648) is in the Louvre.

95.31 had taught in Ecuador...

Had he perchance known Victor's father's first wife there? (Cf. 110.13). I doubt that such a specific locus could be mentioned twice in one chapter without a shade of cross-reference.

96.8 no difference... genteel aquarelle... today

In an interview published in *The Paris Review* (October, 1967) Nabokov says:

> One of *poshlost*'s favorite breeding places has always been the Art Exhibition; there it is produced by so-called sculptors working with the tools of wreckers, building crankshaft cretins of stainless steel, zen stereos, polystyrene stinkbirds, objects trouves in latrines, cannon balls, canned balls. There we admire the *gabinetti* wallpatterns of so-called abstract artists, Freudian surrealism, roric smudges, and Rorschach blots—all of it as corny in its own right as the academic "September Morns" and "Florentine Flowergirls" of half a century ago. (*SO*, 101)

See nn. 96.28 and 127.15.

Nabokov treats the subject of *poshlost'* in art in his *Lectures-R* (p. 309ff.) and in *Nikolai Gogol* (63-74). See also *SO*, pp. 100-101 and 105.

96.10 and that nothing

The New Yorker: "and his belief that nothing."

96.25 Ashcan... Cache Cache... Cancan

"Ash-can" school—a group of eight American painters formed in 1907; the leading figure was Robert Henri (1865-1929). "The Eight," as they called themselves at first, were united in the revolt from the academic aesthetism in contemporary painting.

The Cache Cache (hide-and-seek) and Cancan (a frivolous dance) schools must be products of Nabokov's alliterative invention. In his commentaries to *Anna Karenin*, Nabokov quotes Allen Dodsworth who said that "the notorious can-can... is only a quadrille danced by gross people" (*Lectures-R*, 225).

The narration has by now switched to the theme of painting, one of the main local themes of Chapter Four. Nabokov once admitted that he

> was born a painter—really!—and up to my fourteenth year, perhaps, I used to spend most of the day drawing and painting and I was supposed to become a painter in due time. (*SO*, 17)

Precision in defining color and the shade of color is among the most important achievements of Nabokov's craft. (See Appendix E for the detailed analysis of *Pnin*'s palette). Cf. excerpts from two of Nabokov's letters to Alfred Appel, quoted by the latter in his commentaries to *L* (pp.362 and 405). And it can be demonstrated that the graphic vividness and freshness of his descriptions theoretically derive from certain techniques in painting and etching.

96.26 School. That...

The New Yorker: This and the three subsequent sentences were rolled into one (starting with "That..."), in which the clauses are separated by semicolons.

96.28 string... dreary platitudes

In his second interview with Appel, Nabokov said:

> The charlatan who sells his squiggles to épater Philistines does not have a talent or the technique to draw a nail, let alone the shadow of a nail. (*SO*, 167)

Cf. the poetical but thunderous denunciation of "primitive art" in *Ada*:

> Progressive philistine Art, bootblack blotches and excremental smears on canvas, imitations of an imbecile's doodles, primitive idols, aboriginal masks... (462)

96.30 Dali... Rockwell's twin brother

Salvador Dali (1904-1989), Spanish artist. Norman Rockwell (1894-1978), American illustrator.

96.31 kidnaped

Edmund Wilson spotted the "misprint" (see *N-W*, 310), but Nabokov chose not to correct it in this or subsequent editions (the word was spelled with two p's in the magazine version). Both the second and the third editions of the Webster Dictionary give both variants as correct.

96.32 Van Gogh... Picasso... foibles

Vincent Willem van Gogh (1853-1890), Dutch painter. Pablo Ruiz y Picasso (1881-1973), Spanish artist.

Asked by Appel to elaborate on that pronouncement in *Pnin*, Nabokov said that he admired in Picasso

> the graphic aspect, the masterly technique, and the quiet colors. But then, starting with *Guernica* [i.e. after 1937 - G.B.], his production leaves me indifferent. The aspects of Picasso that I emphatically dislike are the sloppy products of his old age. (*SO*, 167)

See n. 108.14.

96.33 Degas... calèche

Hilaire-Germain-Edgar Degas (1834-1917), French painter. His "Les

calèches à la course" (1873) is displayed in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (see n. 108.14).

Calèche is French for carriage.

97.4 A polished black sedan... convex mirror

The passage is a fine specimen of Nabokov's coloristic and graphic technique. A strikingly similar one is found in his short story "Spring in Fialta" (1938):

> In the lacquer of [the automobile's] elytra a gouache of sky and branches was engulfed; in the metal of one of the bomb-shaped lamps we ourselves were momentarily reflected, lean filmland pedestrians passing along the convex surface... (*ND*, 33)

See n. 97.29.

97.9 Now break... the necessary "naturalization"

Perhaps an important clue to N—'s method of narration. The artistic technique described here is applicable to the way in which Pnin's life is dissected into "curves and panels" and then "put together in terms of reflection." It is because of those reflections and unavoidable aberrations that Pnin fails to recognize his past in the final chapter. The theme of reflection converts here to the sub-theme of a reflected, and distorted, self-portrait; it resurfaces in the very last sentence of the chapter.

97.10 with a remote

The New Yorker: "and a remote."

97.21 and integrative

The New Yorker: omitted.

97.29 comparable to... domestic Madonna

Appel compares this "magical mirror" to certain cryptograms in *L* (see *L*, 359). In a sense, the same convex mirror reflects, in fiction terms, *Pnin*'s author and, on another plane, Pnin himself in N—'s story about him.

In one of his lectures on Joyce's *Ulysses*, having charted various occurrences of the "lankylooking" man in a macintosh who crosses Bloom's path during the day, Nabokov advances the idea that Stephen's discourse in the library points, obliquely, at the macintoshed figure's identity:

> The clue comes [when] Stephen... affirms that Shakespeare himself is present in his, Shakespeare's, works. Shakespeare, he says, tensely: "He has hidden his own name, a fair name, William, in the plays, a super here, a clown there, *as a painter of old Italy set his face in a dark corner of his canvas...*" and this is exactly what Joyce has done—setting his face in a dark corner of this canvas. The Man in the Brown Macintosh who passes through the dream of the book is no other than the author himself. Bloom glimpses his maker! (*Lectures*, pp.319-20, my emphasis)

For an excellent survey of Nabokov's uses of this strategy, the reader should consult *Tammi*, pp.314-20, and p. 317 in particular.

For the fleeting reflections of N— in *Pnin*, see 117.5 and 128.16.

Jan van Eyck (active 1422-1441), Hans Memling (1430/5-1494), and Petrus Christus (c.1400-1473), Flemish painters.

Perhaps the best examples of the small convex mirrors in their works are *Arnolfini and His Wife* by Van Eyck (1434) and *Legend of SS. Eligius and Godeberta* by Petrus Christus (1449). *Tammi* refers the reader to a 1970 work by Boris Uspenski, *Poetics of Composition...* (Originally in Russian; English translation—Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), "for a fuller discussion of such pictorial examples" (p.317).

Van Eyck appears again in 154.18 (see note). On the reflection theme, see *IN-IV*: 2; on Van Eyck in this context, see Gerard de Vries's note "Pnin: Mirrors and Doubles" (*VNRN*, No.18 [Spring 1987], pp.54-8, esp. p.55).

98.5 nom de guerre Moinet

Moinet is a French pejorative for "monk" (see the note below).

98.10 Leonardo! ... so red.

I propose that the quatrain springs, both in meter and in tone, from Robert Browning's (1812-1889) poem *Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister* (1842), a humorous monologue of an ill-natured monk jealous of his good-natured brother (note Victor's pen name—n. 98.5).

Nabokov parodied this poem in *L*:

> *Saint*, forsooth! While brown Dolores,
> On a patch of sunny green
> With Sanchicha reading stories
> In a movie magazine—
> (L, 247; see Appel's note, p.413)

Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), Italian Renaissance artist and scholar. *Mona Lisa* (La Gioconda, 1500-1506) is in the Louvre.

Charles Nicol submits that Victor's poem is not "just about da Vinci's painting, but about his mother" (*Nicol*, p.205).

98.20 (it is now Lake who is dreaming!), lads

See n. 95.17. This is an interesting case of N—'s interpolation momentarily projecting the narration into a slightly shifted perspective, which reminds the reader once again exactly who cuts and edits dreams in the novel.

The New Yorker: The sentence in parentheses is absent.

98.23 Italian skiagrapher

From Greek *skiagraphos*, shadow painter, the name given to Appolodoros (5th c. B.C.), Greek painter, who was thought to have invented the interplay of light and shade for more naturalistic effects (later called *chiaroscuro*—see n. 98.27). He also experimented with foreshortening (cf. 90.10).

Nicol errs in assuming that "there is apparently no such term as 'skiagrapher' in the history of art" and that it may be "an early term for Roentgen photographer" (*Nicol*, p.202).

The theme of shades and shadows in Chapter Four has been heralded by the etymology of the word "squirrel" (see n. 88.29) and it has been cropping up periodically ever since (see especially 90.7; 90.13, 90.14, 94.29, 96.23).

98.24 paradisal glazes

The New Yorker: "radiant glazes."

98.27 gentle chiaroscuro

The disposition of light and shade in a painting was called *chiaroscuro* (from Italian *chiaro*, light, and *oscuro*, dark). The term is used especially of the 17th century masters who liked strongly-contrasting tones, e.g. Rembrandt and Caravaggio; it is discussed in Leonardo da Vinci's treatise *Paragone*. It is also a color wood-engraving technique, introduced by the Italian artist Ugo di Carpi (c.1455-1523).

98.30 He placed... cocktail

Shadows, convex mirrors, receding vistas, unusual refractions, when applied to fiction, combine to form the principal artistic method of composition and exposition in *Pnin*, the method of visual deception and recurrent thematic mutations and aberrations. Cf. the last sentence of the chapter (n.110.28; see also nn.85.9 and 97.7).

See *IN-IV*:2 for a summary of the "Reflection" theme, a volatile but also a most significant series.

98.32 studiously: the red...

The New Yorker: "studiously. The red...."

99.3 Red Sea, Arabia Felix

By Ptolemy's time Greeks had divided the peninsula into several parts, Arabia Felix, Arabia Deserta, Arabia Petraea etc. What Nabokov apparently meant here was Sinus Arabicus (Red Sea), with Arabia Felix stretching eastward of it.

The New Yorker: omitted.

99.10 sport shop in Waindell's Main street and asked

The New Yorker: "sports shop and asked."

99.14 football ball

This is a translation of the tautological Russian "futbol'nyi miach." Soccer is called football in Europe. The soccer ball Pnin buys for Victor and disposes of later, upon learning that Victor does not care for "football," somehow brings up the image of the heavy volume he lugs about campus in Chapter Three, to no purpose as it turns out.

99.25 Martin Eden... British statesman

Martin Eden is a novella (1909) by Jack London (see n. 100.2).

Anthony Eden, Lord Avon (1897-1977), British Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister (1955-1957). The book the lady had in mind was probably *Anthony Eden*, by Lewis Broad (New York, 1955); or *Portrait of a Statesman*, by Dennis Bardens (London, 1955); or possibly *Eden: The Making of a Statesman*, by Alan Campbell-Johnson (New York, 1955)—all of them out by the time of publication of this chapter (1955), but slightly anachronistic in regard to the chapter year (1954).

The New Yorker: "the tall dark lady" was "the lady."

100.1 I mean, said Pnin... Jack London

Jack London (pen name of John Griffith London, 1876-1916), American writer whose stark romantic prose was immensely popular in Russia at the beginning of this century (see 100.12).

The New Yorker: "I mean... Jack London, said Pnin.."

100.5 Pipe in hand... a Mr. Tweed... topical poetry

Cf. the sketch of another closet poet in the novel, Roy Thayer:

> A pair of old brown loafers, two beige elbow patches, a black pipe... the rest was easy to fill out. (156.25)

Cf. also in *L*:

> I switched to English literature, where so many frustrated poets end as pipe-smoking teachers in tweeds. (11)

100.8 The Son of the Wolf

A short story (1900) by Jack London about the Yukon Indians who call white men "Sons of the Wolf." See n. 108.29.

100.9 I'm afraid, he said... author

The New Yorker: "I'm afraid... author, he said.."

100.16 that year

The New Yorker: omitted.

100.21 tidy and cozy

The New Yorker: "clean and cozy."

100.22 A schoolboy should like... professor's top hat.

Pnin expects to meet an ordinary schoolboy with interests characteristic of his age and ken (as Pnin sees them), but Victor is anything but ordinary, is very well read and not at all athletically inclined. This makes the gifts rather unappealing, something Pnin does not fully realize until much later.

The New Yorker: omitted.

100.25 landlord, had come up...

The New Yorker: "landlord, formerly superintendent of the college grounds and now totally deaf, with a white button in one ear, had come up...."

100.29 It was going to rain.

The rain, clearly audible throughout the second part of the chapter, as if it were a backstage accompaniment, starts falling when Victor sets off for Waindell. It also rained at the very beginning of the chapter. Charles Nicol thinks that since "Pnin is Victor's 'water father'... it rains throughout this chapter, even in dreams" (*Nicol*, p.205), but this seems forced.

100.32 it said that... late

A first mild setback for Pnin who has made all necessary preparations to meet Victor that particular day. Generally, this chapter is much less eventful and, therefore, less painful for Pnin than any other chapter in the book, and the tender mutual attachment that begins to grow between Pnin and Victor at this almost exact geometrical and focal center of the book overshadows the two differently unpleasant incidents—the rather unfortunate choice of gifts and Pnin's fall down the steps.

The New Yorker: "it was to the effect that...."

101.2 Easter vacation

Easter Sunday in 1954 fell on April the 18th (and at St. Mark's, for instance, the break probably lasted till April 25, St. Mark's Day). One should assume, therefore, that Victor arrives at Waindell between April 12 and 16.

The New Yorker: "vacation."

101.4 olefactory phobias

The New Yorker: "olfactory" (the spelling preferred by Webster the Third).

101.5 the Winds

The New Yorker: "the parents."

101.9 Tony Brade, Jr., and Lance Boke

Nabokov's heroes not only travel within the book's covers under disguises and aliases (Bob Horn—Robert Karlovich Horn is one example in *Pnin*) but sometimes migrate from one book to another. For instance, the old poet Podtyagin does not die in *Mary*, as one should expect him to, but instead moves, with a queue of other personages, to *G*; and Pnin himself gets a chair in the Russian Department at Wordsmith, Appalachia.

Lance Boke, casually mentioned here, is the main character in Nabokov's short story "Lance" (1952), where he is a distant descendant of the first person narrator (his very surname being a shrunken projection of his maker's).

Bodenstein's most useful work contains a splendid chart of Nabokov's recurring characters, according to which *Pnin* is a major depot of migratory personae (at least five), second only to *G* (see *Bodenstein*, p.285). In fact, Bodenstein considers *Pnin* "the center of the second circle" of characters appearing in Nabokov's American fiction (p.284).

Tammi observes that the English version of the short story "Muzyka" (1932) converts the original "nekto Bok" ["a Bok"] into "a man named Boke" (*Tyrants Destroyed*, p.68. See *Tammi*, p.327, n.76).

101.19 among a motley mess

The New Yorker: "and on it was a mess."

101.21 grandson of a famous St. Bart's headmaster

St. Mark's famous headmaster of thirty-six years (1894-1930) was William G. *Thayer*.

101.23 a fond cousin

The New Yorker: "a fond aunt."

102.2 aunt had married an earl

This enthralled Liza (see 54.5) who has a Philistine weakness for titles and ranks. Cf. Betty Bliss's "awed recognition of such grand things as dining with one's boss, being in *Who's Who*, or meeting a duchess" (155.20).

102.10 no boy could stomach

The New Yorker: "none of the six boys could ever forgive."

102.11 the little mean smirk which crooked

The New Yorker: "the mean smirk that crooked"

102.12 to pick up a neatly folded

The New Yorker: "and picked up from a chair a neatly folded"

102.14 surplice; the station wagon...
The New Yorker: "surplice. The station wagon...."

102.17 Rudbern, twelve miles away... church
At St. Mark's, my source serenely informs me, "on Sundays, the boys attend service, at the St. Mark's church in the village" (op.cit., p.84).

102.19 the simplest way to reach Waindell
For Waindell's location see n. 8.33.

102.20 to get by taxi to Framingham, catch...
Topography, let me repeat, plays an important part in this chapter. In *Pnin* (as well as in *L*, *PF*, and especially *Ada*) invented places (and people) commingle with real ones.

The New Yorker: "to take a local to Boston or Framingham, then catch...."

102.24 old feud between those railways
PF:

> He [Gradus] had fiddled with railway schedules, but these had evidently been arranged by a practical joker since the only available direct train... left at 5:13 A.M., dawdled at flag stations, and took eleven hours to cover the four hundred miles to Exton; you could try to cheat it by going via Washington but then you had to wait there at least three hours for a sleepy local. (277)

The New Yorker: "old feud between the lines of communication"

102.25 had united to grant
The New Yorker: "were granting"

102.27 juggled with timetables
The passage harks back to Pnin's struggle with timetables and fate in the opening chapter. On the other hand, the details of Pnin's waiting for Victor to emerge from a Greyhound very much resemble his meeting Victor's mother in Chapter Two at the same bus station.

103.2 Framingham; Victor
The New Yorker: "Framingham. Victor..."; "a slightly later" in the next line was "a later."

103.7 It rained... It was raining...
It rained in Victor's imaginary city at the beginning of the chapter; the rain stops only in its penultimate paragraph.

103.12 or a limp
The New Yorker: "or fallen arches."

103.21 passengers; and then—
The New Yorker: "passengers. And then—."

103.24 totally bald... dark glasses... brief case.
Pnin had promised Victor to wear "dark spectacles" and hold "a black brief case" with his "monogram in silver" so that Victor could recognize him (see 89.1). Dark glasses are particularly comical since the time is 8:30 P.M. (he expected Victor to arrive earlier). And while Victor identifies Pnin at once, Pnin mistakes Victor for a seven year old boy (who would be a much more sincerely grateful recipient of Pnin's gifts than Victor). Of course, at first glance Pnin can hardly resemble the king of Victor's fancy, and it is precisely through Victor's keen eyes that the reader now sees Pnin.

104.7 the rain (it was pouring...)
The New Yorker: "the rain. (It was pouring...)."

104.8 asphalt glistened... tarnlike
Tarn is a small mountain lake and crossword puzzles's darling.

104.11 a diner
One wonders if this place could not be *The Egg and We*, the restaurant which Pnin patronized "from sheer sympathy with failure" (35.11).

104.12 no disagreeable adventures?
Pnin well remembers his own misadventures in Chapter One.

104.19 Timofey... "muff" ... "prey"

It is tempting, but too easy, to note that Pnin, in the narrator's hands, is an invariable "prey" to his own frequent pronunciation "muffs." "Ahksent" and "sloored" reflect Pnin's slurred English accent.

104.23 Timofey Pahlch

The MS of Nabokov's lecture on Turgenev preserves the following note: "Tourgenev, Ivan Sergayitch (thus the patronymic is pronounced instead of the full ending—gay*e*vitch)." (reproduced in *Lectures-R*, p.62).

It was Nabokov's wont to break down Russian words into meaningful English constituents so that his students could memorize them. Cf. in *LATH:*

> In rapid Russian speech longish name-and-patronymic combinations undergo familiar slurrings: thus "Pavel Pavlovich," Paul, son of Paul, when casually interpellated is made to sound like "Pahlpahlych" and the hardly utterable "Vladimir Vladimirovich" becomes colloquially similar to "Vadim Vadimych." (249)

104.27 extremely sympathetic colleagues

A common Russian mistake in usage—cf. in *RLSK*: "...he made queer mistakes, saying... that fellow is sympathetic—merely meaning that he was a nice chap" (48).

"Simpatichnyi" means, in Russian, agreeable, pleasant.

104.32 In the beginning I... In the beginning Pnin

This particular device of turning off direct speech and switching to a discoursive elaboration occurs in a stylistically comparable environment in *RLSK*:

> "In his last year here [begins Gorget and breaks off]—I don't know what's the matter with this cat, she does not seem to know milk all of a sudden."
>
> In his last Cambridge year Sebastian worked a good deal [now it is V. who picks up]... (50)

105.8 "Jim" ... "Tom" ... a horrible insult

If Cockerell is right, Pnin finally adopted the informal way of addressing his colleagues but, as his luck would have it, approached the wrong person, "trying to convince [a professor] who hardly knew him, that they were old pals, Tim and Tom" (187.21)—yet another case of mistaken identity in a novel with so many of them; N— teases out and explores this one in Chapter Six.

105.11 he had intimately known... as the case might be

Nabokov makes an almost exactly the same remark in *Lectures-R*:

> I have known a number of Russians with whom I have been on friendly terms for two or three decades but whom I would not dream of addressing otherwise than Ivan Ivanovich or Boris Petrovich as the case may be; and this is why the ease with which elderly Americans become Harrys and Bills to each other after a couple of highballs strikes formal Ivan Ivanovich as impossibly absurd. (204)

Vadim Vadimych (not "Vadimich," which is a misprint in the text) can be, of course, a colloquially truncated form of "Vladimir Vladimirovich," which happens to be the name of N—, who thus cursorily introduces himself here (see nn. 104.23 and 128.16).

105.18 Well, well, old boy...

In *Drugie berega* there is a passage omitted in both English versions:

> I remember that when I first met, around 1945, [a fellow émigré] Dobzhanski, a biologist, he remarked rather naively: "Well, well, old boy, you obviously have thoroughly forgotten the mother tongue!" (68)

The New Yorker: "Well, well, old man...."

105.23 "family" ... "woman"

A smooth brief transition from Pnin's accent in English to Victor's French. The first syllable of "familiia" (surname, family) is pronounced in Russian somewhat akin to the English way of saying "femme."

105.26 vous comprenez... un peu

Victor's reply does prove that his French is shaky: the *un* should be omitted ("Do you understand French? Well enough? A little?"—"*Very a little.*").

105.30A sport

Pnin is testing the water in view of his gift, only to find out that Victor is totally indifferent to all sports.

105.30B The first description of box... Lermontov

Pnin uses "box" for Russian *boks* (boxing). The poem in question is Lermontov's "The Song of Tsar Ivan Vasilievich, of the Young *Oprichnik* [a member of Ivan IV's special guard], and of the Brave Merchant

Kalashnikov" (1838), a narrative poem in a stylized archaic folk vein, containing a good Russian fist fight only remotely resembling English boxing. For another Lermontov connection see n. 61.5.

105.32 easy to remember

The New Yorker: omitted.

105.33 first description of tennis... 1875

Cf. in *Lectures-R*: "At the end of chapter 22 of part six, Dolly Oblonski watches Vronski, Anna, and two male guests play tennis. This is July 1875..."(234; see also Nabokov's marvelous sketch of a contemporary tennis costume on the facing page.)

This information, along with the exact year which is not supplied by Tolstoy and has to be reckoned by the reader, Pnin may have obtained from the *Zol. Fond Lit.* volume of Tolstoy material (corresponding to vols. 37-38 of *Lit. nasl.* which was, in part, Nabokov's source—see n. 66.5). In Chapter Five Pnin astonishes his listeners with his profound and detailed knowledge of *Anna Karenin* (see n. 122.15).

Tennis and croquet (see n. 106.10 below) were fashionable sports on Russian estates in the last decades of the last century and early in this one, and not only among Anglophilic squires, like A.A. Vronski or V.D. Nabokov. Incidentally, I notice that Chekhov mentions both games in one sentence in Chapter One of "The House with an Attic"(1896): "My igrali v kroket i v loun-tennis..." [We played croquet and lawn-tennis].

106.1 "Anna Karenina," Tolstoy's novel

Curious that Pnin should use the feminine form of the name (Karenina) in spite of Nabokov's strong and frequent protests (see, for instance, *Lectures-R*, 137fn.; cf. also n. 45.19). In Chapter Five, Bolotov says "Anna Karenin" (see 122.3).

106.3 Latitude of Labrador

That is, on an estate near St. Petersburg.

106.4 Orientalist Gotovtsev, perhaps, you have heard

One ought to presume that this "Orientalist" is no more famous outside *Pnin* than the "Egyptologist" Schonberg. However, Pnin's naive assumption that Victor might have heard of an obscure Russian scholar is amusing and rather like his touching belief that the Clementses might know Liza "in psychiatric circles" (43.21) or, for that matter, like

Poroshin's embittered remark that he had failed to excite his children with such fascinating subjects as "local elective self-government in the Russian Far North in the 17th century or, say, something about the history of the first medical schools in Russia" (118.31).

On the other hand (and in another world), there was a renowned Russian orientalist Pavel Kokovtsev (1861-1942), whose name, rhyming as it does with "Gotovtsev," varies from it in about the same manner as "Godunov" differs from "Goodenough" (see n. 90.29). Kokovtsev was professor of Hebrew, Syriac, and Chaldean literatures at St. Petersburg University and a recognized authority in various branches of Semitics. In 1913, as expert in the notorious blood-libel trial in the Kiev Circuit Court where Mendel Beilis (1873-1934) was charged with the ritual murder of a Christian boy Andrei Iushchinski, Kokovtsev helped to expose the ignorance of the prosecution and later published, along with two other semitologists, a book on the matter entitled *Russkie uchionye o evreiskom verouchenii* [Russian Scholars on the Jewish Religious Doctrine] (St. Petersburg, 1914). Nabokov's father, a fierce opponent of Judophobism, was also at the trial and covered the sessions in the newspaper he edited, *Rech'*. He certainly knew Kokovtsev.

In *G*, "the Orientalist Krivtsov" is a "great friend" of Fyodor's father's (see p.125).

106.10 I was a champion of "kroket"

Pnin demonstrates that he is still very good at croquet in Chapter Five (p.130).

106.24 fortunately it is sugar, not salt

Pnin's remarks about meals every now and then interrupt his literary discourse. Although Nabokov did not invent the technique, he perfected it and turned into a powerful tool of presenting a monologue. (cf. 161.1). This time Pnin sweeps the sugar dispenser off the table. Russians share with others the superstition that spilling salt is a bad omen (precipitating a quarrel with those present).

106.33 if you want to be a footballist

After several literary and personal digressions Pnin finally has reached his goal of bringing up the soccer ball he has bought for Victor. He now makes the same mistake he did in the sport shop, confusing soccer and football.

107.1 I don't care much for football

Charles Kinbote notes in *PF*, "Frankly I too never excelled in soccer and cricket." (117).

107.3 You are not... but said nothing

They are still talking of two different games. Pnin's grimace (perplexed indecisiveness) has appeared on his face before—in Chapter Three (see n. 72.21). His "football" proves to be about as wanted here as *Zol. Fond Lit.* had been by that "other reader."

107.11 rapidly introduced

Pnin hastens to get to the guest room first and dispose of the unwanted ball he had so lovingly displayed on the table (with its "handsome leather" showing—see 100.20).

107.12 his landlord... who had recently

The New Yorker: "his landlord and to Bob Sheppard, the landlord's brother, who had recently".

107.21 the sudden rasp of a window sash

Pnin, upstairs, gets rid of the ball by "defenestration" (see 109.24).

107.27 Charlie Wells... Dr. Neen

Pnin evidently had lodged at his hotel—see n. 63.25.

For other American variations on the theme of Pnin's name see n. 26.24.

108.9 the splendid story of Tolstoy... kidney of the cancer

Tolstoy published *The Death of Ivan Il'ich* in 1886. Nabokov greatly admired the story and included it in his Cornell course on European masterpieces. On March 10, 1951, he wrote to Wilson: "In my European fiction class I have finished lecturing on *Anna Karenin* and *The Death of John, Son of Elijah* (joke)" (*N-W*, 257).

Pnin's diagnosis of Golovin's illness (transposed by a slip of the tongue), though unconfirmed by Tolstoy who never mentions the actual cause of his hero's death is confirmed by Nabokov in his lecture:

> In falling from a stepladder when he was hanging a curtain, he had fatally injured his left kidney (this is my diagnosis—the result was probably cancer of kidney). (*Lectures-R*, 240)

108.14 Van Gogh's "La Berceuse"

"La Berceuse" (1889), also known as "Woman Rocking a Cradle," is now in the Chicago Art Institute, but prior to the 1950s it had been in the collection of John T. Spaulding in Boston and might have been displayed at the Museum of Fine Arts, the art gallery nearest to Nabokov at the time. Hunt, and Degas, paintings mentioned in *Pnin* do belong to the Boston collection.

It is probably this Van Gogh painting that Nabokov refers to in his lecture on *poshlost'*:

> [A Philistine] does not much care for pictures, but for the sake of prestige he may hang in his parlor reproductions of Van Gogh's or Whistler's respective mothers, although secretly preferring Norman Rockwell. (*Lectures-R*, 311)

In *L* Humbert Humbert mentions "that banal darling of the arty middle-class, van Gogh's 'Arlésienne' " (38; see Appel's note, 355). Cf. also 64.25 ("a Toulouse-Lautrec poster"). For Rockwell see 96.30.

108.18 the open window... ten-dollar bill

See n. 107.21. The ten-dollar note is a last-minute substitution for the banished soccer ball.

108.21 he sat down on the edge... his bulky... knees parted

The whole posture has occurred before, in "Lance" (1952):

> Lance is tall and lean... when sitting ill at ease... leaning forward from the edge of a low armchair, his shoulders hunched up, his elbows propped on his big knees—he has a way of slowly clasping and unclasping his handsome hands, a gesture I borrow for him from one of his ancestors. (*ND*, 200-201)

Among these ancestors, besides Victor Wind, are Lance Boke, Victor's friend (see n.101.9), and, strange as it may seem, Pnin himself—see n.169.32.

108.29 a Dr. Yakov London... Russian maiden

Yakov is Russian for Jacob or James. Zarinska, the chief's daughter in Jack London's story, is "the only maiden" who "had caught [the] fancy" of "Scruff" Mackenzie, the White Man. The passage Victor hit upon is on p.43 of the edition I consulted (*The Son of the Wolf*, New York : Garret Press, 1968).

The New Yorker: "Psychotherapeutic" was "Psychotherapic."

109.4 Last summer I read "Crime—

and Punishment," a novel by Dostoevski (1866), which Nabokov thought jejune and carelessly written (see his lecture on it in *Lectures-R*, 109-115).

Only now does Pnin come to understand that Victor is much more intelligent than he imagined. The situation is somewhat similar to an episode in *LATH*, in which V. V. suddenly discovers, with no less sympathy, approval, heartache, even tears, that Bel (his daughter whom he had last seen as a baby and for whom he has prepared more vigorous intellectual treats than Pnin had for Victor) loves Byron, Browning, Coleridge (see p.166ff).

109.16 It still rained... The rain had stopped.

As has been noted in commentaries to the previous chapters, the last paragraph recapitulates all of the chapter "drawstring" themes. The structure describes a full circle (the rain, the dreams); the themes and subthemes are summoned, as if for the last parade, inspected one more time, and dismissed. The themes ("trembling trickles" in the course of a chapter) become "loud torrents" when, toward the end, they conflow. Incidentally, the alliterative play on the "t" and "l" sounds in this passage is very remarkable: "a trembling trickle most of the time, was tonight a loud torrent that tumbled over itself in its avid trukling to gravity..." (109.17).

109.19 The brook in the gully

The Sheppard house is on Creek Street, which the reader learns only in Chapter Six (144.2).

109.26 one of those dreams

When asked (by Alden Whitman of *The New York Times*) whether dreams of flight, recurrent in his works, reflect his own experience, Nabokov answered,

> Yes, in part. The odd fact, however, is that in my early childhood, long before the tremendously dull peripatetics of Revolution and Civil War set in, I suffered from nightmares full of wanderings and escapes, and desolate station platforms. (*SO*, 132)

By the way, such dreams, too, get pfisterised in the book cited by Kinbote and referred to in a previous note.

109.29 great pools of ink

See "Rorschach ink blots," n. 91.33, and the "seascapes, escapes, capes" series in 92.1.

109.30 a chimerical palace... throbbing boat... sea

This is a distant echo of Victor's dream at the chapter's beginning. In one of his lectures on Joyce's masterpiece, Nabokov notes that

> no commentator has noticed yet that as in Tolstoy's *Anna Karenin* there is in *Ulysses* a significant double dream; that is, the same dream seen by two people at the same time. (*Lectures*, 326)

Obviously, Nabokov modified the device, having Pnin see a *sequel* to Victor's sleep-inducing fantasy; indeed, Pnin's dream picks up the plot precisely where Victor's imagination left it at the onset of Chapter Four.

110.1 Ilya Isidorovich Polyanski

The name and patronymic coincide with those of Nabokov's Parisian friend Ilya Isidorovich Fondaminski (1879-1942), editor of the best Russian émigré literary magazine *Sovremennye Zapiski* (1920-1940). See nn. 116.6 and 184.7.

110.3 The Sheppard brothers... relation

The point of the humorous contrast here is that Bob Sheppard is considering selling the house because of its "vulnerable construction" ("audible roof"), whereas his deaf brother is thinking "of silence" and mentally replaying the story of his cousin's death, which he had begun to tell Victor when he was interrupted by Pnin's clattering, though inaudible to him, fall down the stairs.

110.13 his head under his pillow ... (sitting on a bench... Ecuador)

Eric Wind's first wife was said to live in South America (46.20).

In Freudian lore, putting one's head under the pillow is an "unmistakable symptom of residual retro-matric tendency" (Kolmi Bonvivaard, *De twaalf duivels Bÿdragen over de Sexuele Theorie*. Leiden: I.E. Doosje, 1948, p.216, here given in my translation).

The New Yorker: omitted.

110.19 had gone home for a map

The Geography Theme thus comes to a close (see 85.15 et seq.).

110.26 brought down the house

Wilson, in a letter to Nabokov, criticized this euphemistic usage noting that "a fine performance on the stage brings down the house" (*N-W*, 310).

110.24 Pnin sighed a Russian "okh-okh-okh" sigh

In *The Eye* this special sigh is rendered the German way, "och-och-och" (35).

110.28 It was a pity nobody saw... zigzags.

Nobody but N—, of course, who makes the last inspection round of the quiet scene. Julian Connolly suggests that the image of the large, luminous puddle "resonates with the image of the oblong puddle with which *BS* begins and ends, described by Nabokov [in his Introduction, pp.xiv-xv] as evoking the writer's link to the character of Krug" (*Connolly-P*, p.203).

These wrinkled reflections are thematically interlinked with Victor's visual experiments described in 98.30 et seq. (see nn. 98.30 and 85.9).

The "illegible lines" is an ambigory.

Chapter 4.5

We do not know much of that aborted chapter beyond what Nabokov told Alfred Appel in an interview of September, 1966, which was first published in *Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature*, vol. viii, no. 2, Spring 1967. Here is an excerpt from his answer:

> Alas, there was to be an additional chapter, between Four (in which, incidentally, the boy at St. Mark's and Pnin both dream of a passage from my drafts of *PF*, the revolution in Zembla and the escape of the king. . .) and Five (where Pnin drives a car). In that still uninked chapter, which was beautifully clear in my mind down to the last curve, Pnin recovering in the hospital from a sprained back teaches himself to drive a car in bed by studying a 1935 manual of automobolism found in the hospital library and by manipulating the levers of his cot. Only one of his colleagues visits him there—Professor Blorenge. The chapter ended with Pnin's taking his driver's examination and pedantically arguing with the instructor who has to admit Pnin is right. A combination of chance circumstances in 1956 prevented me from actually writing that chapter, then other events intervened, and it is only a mummy now. (*SO*, 84-85)

The slip about St. Mark's (see n. 93.7) may cause one to suspect another one, for it would seem rather bizarre that Blorenge (who is said to be a "strong anti-Pninist," 141.20, and who had met Pnin socially probably only once, at the Clementses'—see 30.27), of all people, should visit ailing Pnin at the hospital. Besides, Blorenge does not appear in the magazine version of Chapter Six (or Chapter Two for that matter). Perhaps, Nabokov meant Professor Cockerell, Pnin's best and most devout imitator and teaser on campus, to make that field trip which Cockerell might have added later to his repertory of Pninian numbers to which he treats N— in the last chapter.

Some of the discarded chapter's scenes were compacted and incorporated into the beginning of Chapter Five.

Chapter Five

"Pnin under the Pines" was the provisional title Nabokov assigned to the chapter in the version perhaps meant for the *New Yorker* (see *IN-I*).

111.1 From the top platform ... tourist

The chapter begins unfolding from an elevated point: N— ("our imagined observer," 112.24) scans the scene below from a "prospect tower," gives a detailed land survey, and then spots his hero in the midst of the woods wrestling with his routine misadventure.

Chapter Five, too, has a boomerang composition. The serene, wooded landscape around Mount Ettrick in New England viewed from the tower in the opening passages is juxtaposed with the "beautifully wooded Grosser Ettersberg" in Germany, the place where Pnin's fiancée Mira was put to death in the Buchenwald extermination camp (see n. 135.25).

Mount Ettrick, as well as the rest of the private toponyms in the novel—including "the fairest of New England's fair states" itself—is, let us repeat, a faery utopia. But since I need a plausible reference point on the map on which to fasten the distance calculations supplied below, I have assumed that the place were Pnin is heading is located in the southeast corner of Vermont, near Brattleboro, where Nabokov used to visit the country house of a friend (see n. 115.6), some 300 miles east of "Waindell."

111.6 Miranda or Mary, Tom or Jim

W. W. Rowe sees in the first name (and in Almira, 112.15) a hidden semaphore pointing to Mira, Pnin's old love, whose image presides over the last part of the chapter (and intermittently turns up elsewhere in it)—see *Rowe-D*, p.62.

Humbert Humbert spent his youth in Hôtel Miranda, which is, as Appel notes, "a heat-shimmer blend of 'mirage', 'se mirer ... 'Mirabella', and 'Fata Morgana' " (*L*, 336).

The abrupt shift of focus in these opening paragraphs creates a most interesting optical effect: a macro view of the "penciled names" on the balustrade (and later of the ant scaling a beam) cuts to a panoramic survey of the vast woods far below, followed by a telescopy of Pnin's tiny motorcar.

111.8 maple, beech, tacahamac, and pine.

None of these appears on the list of the trees Pnin could identify (see 145.19), which is not to imply, of course, that he was unable to recognize the maple or the pine; in fact, the latter tree keeps prodding his memory in the course of the chapter.

Tacahamac is the Balsam Poplar (*Populus balsamifera* or *tacamahaca*), a North American poplar.

Trees line up in a concurrent little botanic-garden alley in this chapter. I list them here alphabetically as they appear in the text:

> alder; beech; catalpa; laurels; locust tree; nettle trees; pine; rosewood; satinwood; tacahamac.

For a complete list of *Pnin*'s flora see *Appendix D.*

112.14 summer of 1954 ... Mary or Almira

Chapter Five begins two or three months after the preceding chapter ends. The novel's chronology becomes more compact toward the end so that the last four chapters span less than a year, whereas the first three cover more than three years of Pnin's life.

112.15 von Goethe

The name "carved in the balustrade by some old-fashioned wag" appears first on the list of the Weimar writers who lived in the vicinity of Buchenwald; see n. 135.27. This is one of several paired elements of the chapter's symmetrical structure.

112.23 sympathetic soul

Rowe notes that the "imagined observer" is "the spirit of Pnin's boyhood sweetheart" (*Rowe-D*, p.63). Discretion and lack of astral experience preclude (as they have every time the matter was brought up in the course of this exegesis) my entering a discussion of the esoterica that inform Mr. Rowe's theory. Brian Boyd very successfully exorcises it in the Appendix to his book on *Ada* (1985). Suffice it to note here that the "sympathetic soul" may well belong to the owner of the varifocal field glass and trenchant literary humor—I mean Pnin's friend and chronicler.

112.28 taking lessons

Nabokov's male heroes seldom drive, and cars in his novels are usually manned by women. Albinus of *LD*, a "Krechmarish driver," loses his sight in a horrible car accident ("it is less surprising that he was a very bad driver than that he could drive at all," *LD*, 233); Krug of *BS* is a "non-driver"

(202); Dreyer of *King, Queen, Knave* drives badly; John Shade of *PF* always sits beside his wife who drives him everywhere; even Humbert H., his long journeys across America notwithstanding, is an erratic motorist (he never drove when Charlotte was alive). In *Pnin*, Joan Clements is always at the wheel, with Laurence occupying the passenger seat: see p.166, where she "backs the car," and p.52, where she tells her husband that he "will be dropped at the library."

Nabokov, too, was chauffeured by his wife; his own disastrous operating sessions are related in *SO* (p.125) and in Field's second book.

112.31 laid up with a sore back

A result of Pnin's falling down the stairs at the end of the preceding chapter. The ensuing paragraphs are but a compressed summary of what was supposed to be the plot of Chapter 4.5 (q.v.).

113.2 "Automobile"... Glidden Tour... surroundings.

This photograph is printed in earlier editions of the *Encyclopedia Americana* (vol.2). The sentence in the text is culled from the legend under the picture which says "Member of an early Glidden Tour stuck in the mud of a country road. Paved surfaces came much later." The boxy vehicle (a *Knox*?) has cardboard in place of a windshield, saying, ironically, "AAA Official Glidden Tour Pathfinder." Pnin the pathfinder will soon be lost in the "maze of forest roads" on his way to *The Pines*.

The chapter is full of verifiable references; see n. 122.15.

113.6 the dual nature of his initial inklings

Cf. "the twofold nature of his surroundings," 24.21, used in a quite different context.

113.24 An irresistible senior... Marilyn Hohn

The "beautiful, intelligent" Marilyn Hohn was also enrolled in Pnin's Russian class in the Spring semester of the previous year. (see 67.21).

113.32 inscrutable white sky... pile of firewood

There may be a thematic link between "a pile of firewood" in the back of the gas station and a rough draft of Mira's death as Pnin imagines her "burned alive in a pit on a gasoline-soaked pile of beechwood" (135.18).

114.1 rooster's cry ... a vocal coxcomb.

In the last chapter, Cockerell contemptuously describes *The Pines* to N— (who has spent several summers at that Russian intellectual haunt) as a "chicken farm of some Privy Counselor of the Tsar." (188.2). It is interesting to observe in retrospect how N— ridicules this preposterous notion by having the Cooks's cook, Praskovia, a "sturdy, sixty-year-old woman of the people" stand on the back porch of the house "surveying the chickens" (119). From "cock's comb" to "cockerel," this minor chicken motif flaps across this chapter and beyond, for it falls flat at the very end of the novel and suddenly turns into Cockerell's "cocker spaniel" Sobakevich. It is then that N—, after being treated to a brilliant but absurdly exaggerated Pnin Show, begins to wonder whether "by some poetical vengeance this Pnin business had not become with Cockerell the kind of fatal obsession which substitutes its own victim for that of the initial ridicule." (189).

114.3 warm wind pressing itself ... attention ...

The Transparent Things of Nabokov's penultimate novel say that the most they "can do when steering a favorite in the best direction, in circumstances not involving injury to others, is *to act as a breath of wind and to apply the lightest, the most indirect pressure*" (*TT*, 92. My emphasis).

Rowe discerns in this passage the active presence of Mira's spirit, related somehow to Eric Wind (see *Rowe-D*, p.63).

The wind, in an attempt to draw Pnin's attention to certain combinations of the recurrent details connecting his present with the past, prompts his memory and generates recollections of a long-gone summer and of his trysts with Mira, thus briefly previewing the story about to unfold at the end of the chapter (its "peacock point").

The peculiar intonation of a murmuring memory groping for the right direction but interrupted by the meddling present, with the "and-and-and" technique at work ("and the sounds, and the smells, and the sadness—"), has been already used elsewhere in the novel:

> But this is the earth, and I am, curiously enough, alive, and there is something in me and in life—" (58.7)

A thirsty or sick squirrel seems to sidetrack his broodings in that earlier episode; here, it is the Hagen-lookalike gas-station attendant who stops abruptly the playback of Pnin's associations and sends him wandering about local forests for an hour. Pnin finds the way out of the maze immediately after the squirrel makes its scheduled appearance in the chapter (see n. 115.22). See also n. 134.3.

The mood of sadness, as usual, gets denser toward the end of the chapter; cf. 79.15.

In a patriotic gesture, St. Petersburg was renamed Petrograd at the beginning of the First World War ("grad" is the Slavic for "burg").

114.15 the man resembled ... Dr. Hagen

The likeness is not pointless at all, in view of the preceding note. Dr. Hagen, "the gentlest of souls alive," shows up at the end of Chapter Five, at the climactic point of the "German" theme (135.19), deploring the vexing fact that the Nazis should have set up the Buchenwald camp where Mira perished in the unpleasant proximity to the German "cultural heart," Weimar. In Chapter Six Pnin wonders of whom Hagen reminds him this time, "Eric Wind? Why? They are quite different physically" (162.24).

114.30 "twelve minutes flat" ... instructions

Wasting time on apparent shortcuts is Pnin's favorite undoing. In Chapter One he wails, "I was thinking I gained twelve minutes, and now I have lost nearly two whole hours" (17.14). In fact, the entire episode much resembles his opening chapter adventure: once again he decides not to follow the "pedantically precise instructions" he was given by his host (cf. 9.2).

115.6 his large and hospitable country house

I have assumed, for convenience's sake, that Al Cook's mansion does not differ much from the summer home of Michael Karpovich (1888-1959), professor of Russian history at Harvard and Nabokov's friend of long standing. A passage in *Field-77* seems to support this—see 117.11. Karpovich invited the Nabokovs to spend a few weeks at his Vermont *dacha* near West Brattleboro soon upon their arrival in New York from France in May, 1940. They visited the place several times later in the forties.

115.20 The wind had subsided

Here, as in Chapter One, mention of the wind accompanies the appearance of the squirrel ("A gray squirrel... was sampling a peach stone. The wind paused..." See n. 24.33).

115.22 a gun shot popped ... still again.

The squirrel does not actually appear in flesh in this chapter, but the "receding sequence of shakes and jumps, with a swinging lilt from tree to

tree" escorts it as the creature dashes away after being shot at (for the possible identity of the sportsman see n. 119.27). Shortly thereafter, Pnin finds the way to his destination (and so does the ant, on another optical plane). *Rowe* supposes a ghostly mediation: "Mira's spirit now acts, apparently transferring its influence from warm wind to a live squirrel" (*Rowe-D,* p. 63).

115.28 everything happened at once

Nabokov often synchronizes heteronomous events in his novels, creating a purely stylistic illusion of fate agency. Cf. in *BS*: "Two things happened together: Ember said 'Douglas' and a dazzled doe plunged into the blaze of our lights." (203)

116.2 Old-Believers

Starovery (Old-Believers) or *Staroobriadtsy* (Old-Ritualists), officially called *Raskol'niki* (Schismatics), a dissident group of Russian Christians which broke with the Orthodox Church in the middle of the 17th century. The schism was caused by certain reforms in the Orthodox rite.

116.3 Maecenas

Gaius Maecenas (d. 8 B.C.), Roman bon vivant and patron of letters during Octavian's reign.

116.4 the last Tsar

Nicholas II, Emperor of Russia from 1894 to 1917.

116.6 Social-Revolutionary groups

One of the largest of Russian anti-monarchist parties (commonly abbreviated *es-ery*). Nabokov's friend and editor Ilya Fondaminski (who was rumored to have perished in Auschwitz) had been a prominent member of that party. See nn. 110.1 and 184.7.

116.9 via Harbin

Many Russian refugees in the twenties fled to Harbin, a city in Manchuria (NE China); some of them eventually moved on to America.

116.17 prosperious

A misprint corrected in subsequent editions.

116.23 Lermontov

This is the last time Lermontov is mentioned in the novel (see nn. 61.5 and 105.30).

116.31 to me and other well-wishers

This casual, matter-of-fact return of the narrator in the active first person forestalls the advent of an important development. Excepting the contrapuntal Chapter Seven, nowhere is his functional presence on stage so conspicuous as in Chapter Five (however, he peeks every now and then at the audience from the wings in Chapters One and Two—see nn. 16.22, 20.21, 45.10. 47.13).

117.10 the first time Pnin ... but I had been there before.

For the first time N— himself (and not his flicking profile, or his footprint, or a shadow of his hand, as in previous instances) enters the action and unequivocally compares his past to that of his subject. For a moment the narration assumes a stylized intonation of a conventional memoir (in a sense, the book *is* a "memoir"); it will be put forward to full use only in the last chapter.

117.11 Russians ... swarming all over the place

> That summer house in West Brattleboro, with its endlessly arriving and departing émigré guests, is given its literary memorial in *Pnin*. Suitably surrounded in birches, it was the very last capital of Russian culture in exile. In fact, Nabokov says that he considerably magnified and embellished the memorial in *Pnin*. (*Field-77*, 234)

Actually, Karpovich's *dacha* was in West Wardsboro, some 10 miles NW of West Brattleboro, as Mrs. Katherine Singleton, who visited the place often in the 1930s and 1940s, kindly informs me. In Chapter Seven, Cockerell, with the arrogant shrug so typical of certain American intellectuals at the time, demotes this "cultural capital" to a "chicken farm of some Privy Counselor of the Tsar" (see n. 188.2).

117.15 Bunin, Aldanov, Sirin

Ivan Bunin (1870-1953), Mark Aldanov (anagrammatic pseudonym of Mark Landau, 1886-1957), and V. Sirin (fl. 1925-1940), Russian émigré writers. In Chapter Fourteen of Nabokov's memoir they are mentioned in

that order:

> Another independent writer was Ivan Bunin. . . [the humorous episode in a Parisian restaurant follows] . . .I met wise, prim, charming Aldanov. . . But the author that interested me most was naturally Sirin. (*SM*, 285-287)

Aldanov, who facilitated the Nabokovs's immigration to America, was the contributing editor of the *Sovremennye Zapiski* and later of *Novyi Zhurnal* published in New York.

Pushkin was the first Russian writer to cast his acquaintances as figurants in serious fiction (*Evgenii Onegin*). Unlike Nabokov, Pushkin concealed the real names under initials and asterisks, but they remained quite transparent for those in the know. Nabokov notes that "there is something very pleasing in Pushkin's device of having his best friends entertain his favorite characters." (*EO*, iii, 120)

Nabokov makes the device much more elaborate and cunning by introducing himself as an author whose works are discussed by his characters. See n. 128.16 and especially 159.25.

117.17 Russian-language newspaper

It must be the New York *Novoe Russkoe Slovo* [The New Russian Word] (see n. 75.17). The *Russkii Golos* [Russian Voice], at the time also a daily and also published in New York, was and remains a poorly disguised lupine voice of the Soviet grandmotherland calling her stray flock back.

117.24 heroic Regional Governments

Nabokov's father served as Minister of Justice in the Crimean Regional Government (November 1918—March 1919), one of the last such bodies in Russia.

117.29 the Free Russia Committee

Among several post-war anti-communist émigré groups in the United States the most notable was the Union for the Liberation of the Peoples of Russia, founded in 1949 by Rafail Abrámovich Abramóvich (real name: Rein, 1880-1963), Menshevik leader, in certain ways resembling, perhaps, Samuil Shpolyanski of *Pnin*.

117.33 Professor Bolotov, who taught the History of Philosophy

One of the frequent guests at Wardsboro was George Fedotov, a theologian and historian (1886-1951). See n. 118.14. Bolotov was born circa 1886—see 122.4.

118.14 difficult American children... with no sense of nature

Cf. Nabokov's letter to Wilson written after a return from Vermont:

> The thoroughly americanized Karpovich children were awfully tickled by Prof. Fedotov shaking hands with them before retiring for the night. (*N-W*, 66)

Nabokov once offered his students a simple test on tree identification which they all flunked miserably—see *EO*, iii, 9.

118.28 Igor and Olga

Igor, the son of Varangian Prince Riurik, was the Prince of Kiev (912-945); his wife Olga became the Princess of Kiev upon his death (945-969). It is hardly accidental that nostalgic Poroshin should have chosen those names for his twins.

118.32 self-government in the Russian Far North...

A reference to *Pomor'e*, the region on the shores of the White Sea and Lake Onega (see n. 120.14) thoroughly colonized by Russian settlers by the 17th century. See M. Bogoslovski's *Zemskoe samoupravlenie na russkom severe v XVII v.*, vol.1 (Moscow, 1909). In fact, I am almost certain that Count Poroshin had in mind that very book, the sentence in the text being a literal translation of its title (see the note below).

119.1 history of the first medical schools in Russia...

This, too, is a verbatim translation of an authentic Russian title (along with the correct reference), *Istoriia pervykh meditsinskikh shkol v Rossii* (St. Petersburg, 1883), by Iakov Chistovich, Russian physician and historian of medicine (1820-1885).

119.17 sturdy... woman... knuckles on hips... matronly blouse

A strikingly similar pose is registered in *BS*: "...a very fat Olga in the yellow blouse he disliked, arms akimbo, looked up at Krug..." (170).

See n. 114.1 on the "chicken motif."

119.23 stolid old Cossack

This is the book's third Cossack—see 34.11 and 71.14.

119.27 the killing of small forest animals

One wonders if this "old Cossack" did not shoot, and miss, the

squirrel in the nearby forest when Pnin was frantically trying to find the road out of it (see n. 115.22).

119.29 Pnin knew well Professor Chateau

Chateau had helped Pnin to move to America (see 46.23).

120.6 obscure and trite ... a mountain of platitudes

In his lecture "Russian Writers, Censors, and Readers" (1958) Nabokov revises this *mot* a little: "mountains of triteness, plateaus of platitudes" (*Lectures-R*, 8).

120.11 birches and bilberries

Bilberry (*Vaccinium membranaceum*, *V. caespitosum*, or *V. uliginosum*) is kin to the European whortleberry, bilberry proper (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), Russian *chernika*, or bog bilberry, Russian *golubika*. Both the tree and the berry are quite indigenous to Northern Russia.

120.12 Lake Onkwedo... Lake Ohrida... Lake Onega.

Lake Onega [*Onezhskoe ozero*] is surrounded by S. Karelia and the Vologda Province in Russia (62 N lat.), whereas "Lake Onkwedo" (presumably, S. Vermont) and Lake Ohrid (S. Yugoslavia and E. Albania) are both on the 42nd parallel.

The initials of the three lakes form a triple zero of the kind encountered in *PF* where the names of the three New Wye lakes are Omega, Ozero (Russian for "lake"), and Zero. See n.151.7.

120.18 a hummingbird in probing flight

Cf. a somewhat expanded version of this image in *L*: "... hundreds of gray hummingbirds in the dusk, probing the throats of dim flowers" (159).

120.19 catalpa in ample bloom

Catalpa, a small genus of American trees of the trumpet-creeper family (*Bignoniaceae*). The Northern Catalpa blooms in late May or early June, which narrows the search for the chapter's possible day to only two or three Fridays (see n. 123.4).

120.21 bestiary

A medieval didactic description of beasts based on the Greek *Physiologus* (the 2nd c. A.D.).

120.22 tremendous porcupines... little skunks...

Cf. in a letter to Wilson (June 16, 1942):

> We are going to Vermont in the beginning of next week, and will stay there (in a ram-chakal farmhouse haunted by great sulky porcupines, song-of-Bernadette-smelling skunks, fireflies and a number of good moths) until well into August. (*N-W*, 66-67)

120.27 Yellow Warblers

The bird is *Dendroica aestiva*, very common everywhere in the U.S. Cf. in *PF*:

> ... the extraordinary blend of Canadian Zone and Austral Zone that "obtained," as he put it, in that particular spot of Appalachia where at our altitude of 1,500 feet northern species of birds, insects and plants commingled with southern representatives. (160)

Wordsmith of *PF* must be somewhere near "Onkwedo," just across the Appalachian trail.

121.4 sitting very straight ... clutching the steering wheel

In a letter to Wilson, Nabokov wrote: "I should dearly like to see you driving up—sitting very straight—in that ancient automobile." (*N-W*, 169)

121.12 a battered book

It is *Anna Karenin*, as it will come out presently (see 122.2).

121.24 Avtomobil', kostium... Ayzenhauer!

"The car, the suit—well, you positively look like an American, a regular Eisenhower" (who was at the time in the second year of his presidency).

121.28 some mutual friends

The Belochkins, as it transpires later that day—see 131.25.

122.5 when I was a lad of seven

Which means that Bolotov was born in 1886 or 1887—see n. 117.33.

122.7A Lyov Nikolaich

This not very common spelling of Tolsţoy's first name follows his own pronunciation of it (see 73.29). Nabokov comments on this transliteration in *Lectures-R*, p.216. It has at least one American precedent (phonetically even more exact): the 16-volume *Works of Lyof* [sic] *N. Tolstoi*, New York, 1929.

Mark the "slurred" variant of the patronymic (cf. 104.23).

122.7B does not know on what day... Friday... Thursday...

The clockman came to the Oblonski house on Fridays (Part 1, p.17 in the 1935 Modern Library edition which Nabokov used for his notes to the novel—see n. 122.15). Here is the exchange between Lyovin and Kitty's mother at the skating rink on the *same* day:

> "Delighted to see you," said Princess Shcherbatski. "We are at home on Thursdays, as usual."—"Which means today?"—"We shall be delighted to see you," replied the Princess stiffly. (p.40)

Nabokov thought it was a slip on Tolstoy's part (see *Lectures-R*, 220), but ascribed it in part to the phenomenon of time relativity in *Anna Karenin*, which he discovered and imparted to Pnin who would bring it up later (see n. 129.30).

The day in *this* novel is also a Friday—see n. 123.3.

122.15 I can tell you the exact day ... Prince of Wales

One recalls that during this and the preceding year (1953) Pnin was studying Tolstoy, evidently for his *Petite Histoire* of Russian letters, one of his sources having been the heavy *Zol. Fond Lit.* of Chapter Three. Perfectly synchronically, Nabokov himself was doing research on *Anna Karenin*; on July 30, 1954, he tells Wilson that he was approached to compile

> ... an edition of *Anna Karenin* in English with my notes, commentaries, introduction, etc., for Simon and Schuster. They wanted a revision with notes for Part One first, and this I have just completed. (*N-W*, 285)

The project fell through, but Nabokov passed the findings thus accumulated partly to his Cornell students, partly to his creature Pnin. In his lecture on *Anna Karenin*, Nabokov establishes, through various calculations which seem unassailable, the opening date as Friday the 11th (Old Style), 1872 (see *Lectures-R*, 190-192).

In his scholarly monologue, Pnin seems to be reading from an index card palmed him by Professor Nabokov. Compare the latter's note 17 to the line "Beust rumored to have traveled to Wiesbaden":

> Count Friedrich Ferdinand von Beust (1809-1886), Austrian statesman . . . Just before Christmas, 1871, immediately after presenting his credentials, he left England to spend two months with his family in North Italy. According to . . . his own memoirs . . . his return to London via Wiesbaden coincided with preparations for the thanksgiving service to be held in St. Paul's Tuesday, February 17/15 [*sic;* surely, a misprint; it should read 17/5], 1872, for the recovery (from typhoid fever) of the Prince of Wales [i.e. future Edward VII, 1901-1910—G.B.]. Of Beust's passage through Wiesbaden on his way back to England Oblonski read on a Friday; and the only Friday available is obviously February 23/11, 1872—which fixes nicely the opening day of the novel. (*Lectures-R*, 213)

Further in the same note Nabokov discusses a curious paradox, a fine literary convention by which Steve Oblonski "whom Tolstoy created from top to toe" should read about a real but obscure diplomat Beust. The question is, says Nabokov,

> which of the two, the "real-life" Count Beust, or the "fictitious" Prince Oblonski is more alive, is more real, is more believable. . . .The good Beust remains a vague and conventional figure, whereas Oblonski, who never existed, is immortally vivid. And furthermore, Beust himself acquires a little sparkle by his participating in a Tolstoyan paragraph, in a fictitious world. (*idem*)

By installing this episode into his own fiction Nabokov made it twice removed from "reality" and thus twice more intricate technically. In Pnin's world, Oblonski is still a character in the famous novel, while Beust is a "real" Austrian statesman; but then both Pnin and his reality are fabrications, and the spiral of a literary device grows another whorl.

122.16 the remembered tang of northern pines

Pnin's memory received initial impetus a few pages earlier ("a Baltic resort, and the sounds, and the smells, and the sadness—" 114.7), then another, when he "again remembered a distant first day in the country" (124.28), upon which it finally released a vivid picture of that particular summer evening of his past, the evening that leads to the chief thematic knot in the chapter (see n. 132.16), followed by the expected cadence of its closing paragraph ("Pnin slowly walked under the solemn pines. . . " 136.7 et seq.).

122.17 The action of the novel starts. . .

Cf. in *Lectures-R*: "The action of the novel starts at 8 A.M., Friday, February the 11th (old calendar), 1872. . ." (190).

122.19 In his morning newspaper

As Nabokov states in his note 14 to *Anna Karenin* (see op.cit., 212), it must be the *Russkie Vedomosti* [Russian Gazette], a Moscow daily (1868-

1918), which I have been unable to consult for the item in question. The other liberal Moscow newspaper, *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, which I did peruse for the month of February, 1872, does not mention Beust's journey; instead, in the issue of February 17 (Old Style), it publishes the news of the Count's having been present, among other dignitaries, at the Thanksgiving service in London.*

Nabokov once said, "...to make his magic, fiction, look *real* the artist sometimes places it ... within a definite, specific historical frame, citing fact that can be checked in a library—that citadel of illusion." (*Lectures-R*, 213).

Chapter Five is quite obviously stuffed with such fiction-of-fact references to actual sources and people, including the book's author (see nn. 117.15, 118.32, 119.1, 122.27, 123.8, 128.16).

122.27 his own memoirs in two volumes

Pnin, no doubt, has in mind the English version of the book (which Nabokov consulted), *Memoirs of Friedrich Ferdinand, Count von Beust*, 2nd edition, London, 1887. In the German original (*Aus Drei Viertel—Jahrhunderten*, Stuttgart, 1887), the account of Graf von Beust's return trip to London in winter, 1872, is in the second volume, pp.551-53.

123.4 till Monday

Pnin's Day in Chapter Five must be then a Friday (as it was in Chapter One). In 119.9 Olga Poroshin's beau is said to have arrived "for the weekend."

123.6 Susanna Karlovna

The Russian custom of using the patronymic sometimes extends to foreigners, often in a whimsical way. Susan is the daughter of Charles (Rus. "Karl") Marshall.

123.8 a three-story brick-and-timber mansion

This is the longest and most detailed architectural digression in the novel (for the other two see 93.7 and pp.144-146). The classical method Nabokov usually follows in such cases dictates that he give a minute account of the grounds and exterior of the house and then move inside and

* Gerard de Vries, in a recent note on this place in *Pnin*, connects "Prince of Wales" with the homophonic (in English) title of Ivan Pnin's *The Wail of Innocence* (see my n. 7.4) supposing, after Field (*Field-67*, p.139), that "Pnin frequently wails" (!) and concluding that "no doubt is allowed about Pnin's being the real Prince of Wails" (*VNRN*, No.18 [Spring 1987], pp.57-8). The absurdity of this logic would be too crude even if it were a legpull.

proceed with a no less meticulous description of interior arrangement and furniture. In his commentaries to *Evgenii Onegin* Nabokov observes: "I do not know if anybody has ever pointed out the curious difficulty attending the finding of equivalent terms for the parts of a house in different languages" (*EO*, ii, 540).

123.17 Samuel Sloan

Samuel Sloan (1815-1884) was an American architect, the editor of the *Architectural Review* and author of several important books on architecture. The buildings he designed are mostly in Pennsylvania.

The two quotations in the text are from *Sloan's Homestead Architecture*, Philadelphia, 1861 (see Design VII, "An Irregular Northern Villa"):

> Bold, beautiful, and peculiar in its manifestation of architectural style, this villa is *well adapted to the highest requirements of social life*; on the shore of the Northern Lake, at the foot of the majestic mountain, or by the waters of the swift-flowing river, seems to be its accordant life... We call it Northern because of *the aspiring tendency of its roof and towers*, and the adaptation of its interior arrangements to the habits and customs of Northern living. (p. 101; the phrases Nabokov transferred to *Pnin* are in italics)

This description might well suit the needs of Russian refugees almost deliberately mistaking Lake Onkwedo for Lake Onega. On the page facing 101 there is an engraved picture of "An Irregular Northern Villa." The whole episode is a splendid example of a correct citation (verifiable in the "Citadel of Illusion"—see n.122.15) inserted in a work of fiction to strengthen its frame.

124.28 again remembered a distant first day

See n. 122.16.

124.31 rubber overshoes, a sensible precaution... grass.

The local blend of "Canadian and Austral Zones" works both ways on Pnin (and on other Russian inhabitants of the place): it reminds him of the summer of long ago spent in northern Russia, but it also makes him superwary, for he is on the guard for possible "sub-tropical" surprises.

One also recalls his habit of wearing rubber gloves whenever he goes to the library stacks, "to avoid being stung by the *amerikanski* electricity in the metal of the shelving" (77.6).

125.3 Konstantin Ivanich

Must be a misprint: the truncated form of the patronymic is

"Ivanych," or, in Nabokov's transliteration, "Ivanïch." There are several such printer's errors in the book.

125.6 a large New York university
It is named in 34.31 (Columbia).

125.8 at least five years
This would seem to indicate that they last saw each other in 1949, perhaps at the reception in Bolotov's honor (see 120.1). But Pnin could have met Chateau in New York three years later, in the spring of 1952, at a gathering "on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of a great writer's [Gogol] death"—see n. 185.31.

125.13 nettle trees
Any tree of the genus *Celtis*.

125.14 other Russian expatriates
Ivan Bunin, who lived in Grasse in the twenties and thirties, was one of them.

125.18 everything about Chateau
I can point out at least one other instance of Nabokov's using this "old-fashioned literary formula," in the short story "First Love" (1948, incorporated later in *SM*): "...everything about her was extremely proper and stylish..." (*ND*, 65).

125.31 does not know geography, is immune to noise
This explains Pnin's gross misjudgment of Victor who turns out to be anything but a "typical American" student, as Pnin sees the latter. In fact, Victor loathes noise almost as much as Pnin does (see 94.21), which is no mean feat, for Pnin must hold an indoor world record for sensitivity to noise; besides, Victor is a veritable expert not merely in geography, but in the very special literary branch of the science (see n. 86.16).

126.12 X-rayed... "a shadow behind the heart."... good title
A letter to Wilson (of February 21, 1952) preserves a lengthy draft of this sentence in *Pnin:*

> Ghosts of a horrible experience I had in the spring of 1948, complete with endless sputum-analysis and a bronchoscopy, crept back into my life when a routine X-ray examination here revealed a "shadow behind the heart"—something that has been haunting me for more than ten years and that no doctor has been able to explain—but what a wonderful title for an old-fashioned novel! (*N-W*, 272)

126.24 Ivan Ilyich Gramineev

The first name and patronymic are those of the hero of Tolstoy's story mentioned in Chapter Four (see n.108.9).

126.29 as overcast as it had begun

Gramineev, typically of many Russian émigrés, confuses a Russian northern summer (mostly cloudy, with scattered showers in the afternoon) with the less predictable but generally brighter New England weather.

126.33 There his easel stood in delicate silhouette

This image will close the chapter (see 131.15), with the easel replaced by the "emblematic couple," and the blue sky turned "ember-red."

127.15 "Mother Volga" ... "April Glade"

For the "Mother Volga" see n. 10.15. An "April glade" is the subject of one of Mira's snapshots in Pnin's rememoration (133.32).

127.17 a museum in Moscow

The Tretiakov Gallery would seem to be the only Moscow museum that could house Gramineev's works.

127.22 is about to marry a third time

The name of Liza's fiancé is Church (see 86.10).

127.23 took Victor ... to California

Victor spent the beginning of that summer in California with his mother and the rest of it working at a Yosemite hotel (see 153.12). This reference helps to set the probable month of the chapter as June. See n. 120.19.

128.7 observant Chateau

Pnin, by contrast, is *not* observant—see n. 65.6.

128.8 A score of small butterflies ... settling again.
On 18 February, 1957, Nabokov wrote to Wilson:

> One exquisite point about *Pnin* is the little conversation between Pnin and Chateau about me and the blue butterflies at their feet. I actually described and named that particular Lycaenid (*Lycaeides samuelis* Nabokov, type locality Karner, near Albany, N. Y.). (*N-W*, 307)

Nabokov first described this subspecies of *Lycaeides melissa* in his article "The Nearctic Forms of Lycaeides Hüb[ner]" (*Psyche*, 50, nos.1-2, 1943; see especially pp.97-99), where the butterfly is not yet given the name of its discoverer and is referred to as *Lycaeides melissa* subsp[ecies] *samuelis* nom[en] nov[um]. In his subsequent article on the subject, "Notes on the Morphology of the Genus Lycaeides" (*Psyche*, 51, nos.3-4, 1944) Nabokov ascertaines the butterfly's distinctive structural features and calls it for the first time *Lycaeides melissa samuelis* Nabokov (see p.109). Finally, in his major taxonomical work on Lepidoptera, "The Nearctic Members of the Genus *Lycaeides* Hübner," published separately in the *Bulletin of the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard College* (vol.101, no.4, February 1949), Nabokov summarizes his classification of this subspecies on pp.535-540. Among specimens examined therein several come "from vic. Albany (Karner, formerly Center), N. Y.." The paratypes of the butterfly are photographically reproduced on Plate 6 (figs.77,78) and Plate 9 (figs. 121,122,123,124,125) appended to the work. Joann Karges, in her *Nabokov's Lepidoptera: Genres and Genera* (Ardis: Ann Arbor, 1985), says that the "Karner Blue" is now protected in New York state (p.81).

This particular insect haunts the pages of other Nabokov writings as well. He mentions it parenthetically as early as 1942 in a letter to Wilson: "...some butterflies I had described (not the one referred to here [i.e. in his poem "On Discovery of a Butterfly," published in *The New Yorker* on May 15, 1943], which is in New York and which I visited too)" (*N-W*, 91).

According to an entry in his notebook, Nabokov revisited his butterflies in 1950, "Near Karner, between Albany and Schenectady, New York, June 2 [12?—see below], 1950" (*SO*, 199). Cf. a letter to Wilson of May 15, 1950:

> ...then we shall stay there till the 11th and fetch Dmitri [VN's son, who was then at Holderness school, Plymouth] in New Hampshire on the 12th to go back to Ithaca through Albany near which, at a place called Karner, in some pine-barrens, a little blue butterfly I have described and named ought to be out. (*N-W*, 246)

It is quite possible that Dmitri Nabokov has singled out that particular occasion in his essay "On Revisiting Father's Room":

> ...spirals of cow dung, a dirt road with a succession of puddles and damp patches over which blue butterflies must hover. (*QUENNEL*, p.133)

A similar depiction of the locality and actual scene appears in *SM*:

> ...a dense crowd of small, bright blue male butterflies that had been tippling on the rich, trampled mud and cow dung through which I trudged rose all together into the spangled air and settled again as soon as I had passed. (138)

The earlier Russian version of the memoir contains yet another passage with this butterfly on the wing in its unnatural environment:

> ... or even in the midst of the relics of some old pine grove by the railroad, between the voided in this context Albany and Schenectady (one of my favorite godchildren, my blue *samuelis*, flutters there)... (*Drugie berega*, 128)

128.16 Pity Vladimir Vladimirovich is not here

At first, the author was mentioned by his pen-name familiar to Russian émigrés (see 117.16); now Chateau calls him by his full name and patronymic. Actually, they had flashed momentarily in 105.12 in the guise of "Vadim Vadimych" which, as we know, can be a colloquially reduced variant of the "tapeworm-long" Vladimir Vladimirovich. The involuted "Beust-device" (the infusion of "real people" into fiction to sharpen the illusion of reality) observed before assumes here a most peculiar function, for the author dispatches his double and namesake into the world he has made. A singularly curious aspect of it is that it seems to be the first time in world literature that characters call their creator by his real name (not to mention the patronymic), which, as in most religions, is usually taboo.

128.19 his entomology was merely a pose

There must have been other Russian émigrés who shared Pnin's rather absurd view. I came across this entry in the diary of Mme. Bunin: "Talked about Sirin. D. S. [Merezhkovsky] said: 'I'm afraid, all this is but mimicry'." (*Ustami Buninykh* [In the Bunins' Words], ed. by Militsa Greene, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1977, vol.2, p.233).

Cf. "All that butterfly business is only a publicity stuff" (*LATH*, 36; noticed by Pekka Tammi, see *Tammi*, 334).

The observant Chateau's reply ("Oh no," said Chateau. "You will lose it some day") is an obvious attempt to change the subject, but it also sounds slightly ambiguous because the "it" may be taken to refer not to Pnin's cross, as it actually does, but to his naive "impression" that V.V.'s entomology is merely a pose (in the sense "You will change your mind, eventually").

Of course, Pnin could not be expected to know that Nabokov was a distinguished lepidopterist and expert in the taxonomical labyrinths of certain genera of butterflies and moths, that he worked as a Research Fellow at Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology (1942-1948), and that he published a score of scientific papers on lepidoptera.

129.2 his friend's agnostic attitude

Pnin believes, "dimly, in a democracy of ghosts," and thus is, from the "prospect tower observer's," i.e., the reader's, point of view, much farther from truth than, say, Chateau. See n. to 135.9.

129.3 A horsefly... blind fool... his meaty palm

This is the second insect in a row that makes a fleeting appearance in as many paragraphs since Chateau brought up the entomology theme (butterfly-dragonfly-horsefly). Cf. in *SO*: "...to dispatch two or three of these tipplers [tabanids] with one crush of the gloved hand as they glued themselves to the neck of my mount afforded me a wonderful emphatic relief..." (201).

"Horsefly" in Russian is "slepen'," from "slepoy," blind.

129.30 Lyovin's spiritual time ... relativity in literature

Nabokov enlarges on this most interesting observation in his *Anna Karenin* lectures; see especially "Tolstoy's Timing," *Lectures-R*, 190-194, and "Structure," 194-198. Here is an excerpt from the latter: "This is the moving skeleton of the book, which I have given in terms of a race, with the seven lives at first abreast, then Vronski and Anna pressing forwards, leaving Lyovin and Kitty behind..." (198).

Elsewhere in his Tolstoy lectures Nabokov notes that Tolstoy had a very peculiar sense of timing, for he had discovered a method of "picturing life which most pleasingly and exactly corresponds to our idea of time," and adds, "he is the only writer I know of whose watch keeps time with the numberless watches of his readers." (*ibid.*, 141).

The format of the present work prevents me from entering the embrangled discourse of the subject in any detail. I should like to point out, however, that Pnin's observation is more than valid: a thorough examination of *Anna Karenin*'s chronology (including drafts and recensions) which I once undertook for another work proved that Tolstoy's day may consist of as many as forty-two hours (Lyovin's first day in Moscow, February 11, 1872) and that there may be about 600 days in his leap year (1876).

I refer the reader to two more or less recent papers on the matter, Gary R. Jahn's "A Note on the Organization of Part 1 of *Anna Karenina*" (*Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, vol.16, 1982, no.1, pp.82-86), and, more to the point, Vladimir E. Alexandrov's "Relative Time in *Anna Karenina*" (*The Russian Review*, vol.41, 1982, no.2, pp.159-168).

130.14 teemed with Madam Bolotov ... the best player

As a youth Pnin was a "champion of *kroket*" (106.10).

The funny misprint "teemed" (instead of "teamed") had been spotted by Wilson but was allowed to stay in subsequent editions of *Pnin*.

131.15 extremely unpleasant cardiac sensation ... still air

No doubt, a relapse of the attack Pnin had in Chapter One. He again is losing "discreteness" by grading into his environment; it is perilous, because "man exists only insofar as he is separated from his surroundings" (20.10). This familiar seizure precedes the disturbing conversation with Mme. Shpolyanski which at last sets forth Pnin's painful memory of Mira and her death, something that he has been instinctively trying to hold back all day. The inexorable "still air" of anguish suddenly sets in.

131.27 great friends of yours

Roza Shpolyanski already mentioned this connection when she first saw Pnin (121.28); she knew Mira Belochkin, Pnin's fiancée and his pediatrician's daughter.

132.9 Tshay gotoff

Wilson's remark that this spelling reflects the correct Russian pronunciation (see *N-W*, 310) is quite erroneous; "tea" in proper Russian is pronounced "chai" [as in *which eye*], not "tshay."

132.16 Two kerosene lamps ... luminous mist

Whenever Pnin melts into his background during his bizarre spells, he invariably sinks into his past, and the more powerful and protracted the swoon, the deeper he sinks (see especially Chapter One). This peculiar symptom affords N— a nice opportunity to retrieve yet another bit of his subject's biography without disturbing the surface of narration. Pnin's vision in Chapter Five refers to the summer of 1916 (see n. 177.14) which he, "a Petrograd University freshman" (114.6), had spent at a Baltic resort near N—'s aunt's estate. This is disclosed by N— in the last chapter in which he sheds the mask altogether. Pnin briefly recalls his arrival at that *dacha* in 114.6, and later this memory flits across his mind two more times (122.16 and 124.28). Now when he yields to it at last, it produces an animated picture in a rapid but vivid flashback. The question whether it is Pnin who is recollecting that distant summer, or N— who adjusts Pnin's memory so that it may plausibly reflect and fit his own remembrance of the same summer spent on his aunt's estate, ought to remain imponderable until the resolving Chapter Seven. One early and curious, if faint, hint at the latter possibility (N—'s having his own designs in mind) that the watchful reader will obtain there concerns Dr. Pnin's pince-nez which

looked like that of "the late Dr. Chekhov"; at that point the reader is supposed to go back to the passage under discussion and compare Pnin's father's name and patronymic (Pavel Antonovich, here mentioned for the first and last time in the book) to those of Chekhov (Anton Pavlovich) to see the amusing effect and to consider its possible drift. See n.176.5.

132.24 Garden Strawberries... jams... zwiebacks

In his *EO* Nabokov devotes a few inspired pages to exact description of various Russian berries and jams. Here is one on strawberries:

> ...the wild and cultivated strawberry (*zemlyanika*), and the wild and cultivated hautbois or green strawberries (*klubnika*—often confused by provincial Russians with the ordinary garden strawberry, *sadovaya zemlyanika*, *viktoriya*, etc.)... (ii, 325)

In the uniformly provincial Russia of today the garden strawberry is called "klubnika," a misnomer, while the real "klubnika" has clean disappeared from Soviet gardens.

As for jams,

> Homemade preserves—cherry, raspberry, strawberry, gooseberry, red and black currant... would be presented to guests in small glass dishes on a tray... (ibid., 324)

Speaking of the Russian evening tea in his lecture on *Anna Karenin* Nabokov mentions "cakes, jams, and various tasty Russian tidbits" that "would be served between 9 and 10 p.m." (*Lectures-R*, 190).

132.32 Dr. Belochkin's blind hand ... the hole of his tea

The scene balances on the rim of a parody of the chess-episode in *Evgenii Onegin* (iv, 26):

> I Lenskii peshkoiu lad'iu
> Beriot v rasseian'i svoiu
> [And Lenski with his pawn
> takes in abstraction his own rook]

The very next sentence in *Pnin* seems to contain yet another faint allusion to Pushkin's poem (see n.133.5).

Much of the setting (a cottage veranda on which a game of chess is played by the kerosene lamp) can be found in *The Defense* where the board is also placed "between the lamp and the raspberries" (63) and where doctors also seem to have propensity for the game: Luzhin senior is said to have played with "the village doctor" (64), and much later in the novel, his son sees a movie in which "the girl returned ... to her parents' house, and paused in the doorway, while in the room, not seeing her yet, her grizzled

father was playing chess with the doctor, a faithful friend of the family..." (191).

133.5 widow of General N—

Prince N., a general, is Tatiana Larin's husband and a distant relation of Onegin (never mentioned by name in the novel but called "Gremin" in Modest Tschaikovsky's dreadful libretto for his brother's popular melodrama). The Russian convention is to use capital N in much the same fashion as English uses X.—to conceal identity or to avoid possible complications. There is a Prince N. on Antiterra, too, complete with appropriate allusions to Pushkin—see *Ada*, p.10. Of course, in this particular case the N, with the two trailing dashes, ought to stand also for the first letter of the Narrator's surname; and indeed, in Chapter Seven the reader discovers that, in the summer of 1916, the Narrator "happened to visit a dreary old aunt at her... country seat not far from a famous resort on the Baltic coast" (177.16).

In the first chapter, Pnin's enchanted vision, in the aftermath of his strange attack, retrieves one of his own Baltic aunts, together with the "great ham actor Khodotov" (27.20). There is a serious thematic dilemma here, which entails, among other things, the question of N—'s general reliability—see n. 177.16 and *IN-IV*: 3-4.

The "famous resort" is evidently the coast of the Baltic Sea near Riga.

133.9 eighteen-year-old boy

This establishes the year of that summer as 1916 and helps to synchronize it with the episode related by N— in the second section of the last chapter.

133.13 my poor Pnin

My Poor Pnin was the novel's working title and remains, one assumes, the title of N—'s book on Pnin (see *IN-I and IV*). Pekka Tammi, who makes an interesting list of narrator's appellations to his hero (he calls them "the narratorial possessives") in Nabokov's books, notes a similar intonation in Pushkin's "My poor Lenski!," citing "My poor Romantovski" ("Leonardo") or "My poor little Cincinnatus!" (*IB*) as evidence (see *Tammi*, p.103 and fn.94). *Pnin* yields especially many examples. Cf. also N—'s exclamation "Poor Liza!" which carries a literary load (see n.181.32).

133.18 the sense of diffusion and dilation

This is one of the principal symptoms of Pnin's weird condition; cf. in

Chapter One: "The foliage and the flowers... appeared to detach themselves in one undulatory body from their pale-blue background which, in its turn, lost its papery flatness and dilated in depth till the spectator's heart almost burst in response to the expansion." (24.6)

133.29 the fads of his and Mira's youth... photography.

Cf. Bunin's *Zhizn' Arsen'eva* [The Life of Arseniev]:

> Ona liubila igrat' v kroket, shchyolkat' chto popalo fotograficheskim apparatom... [She enjoyed playing croquet and taking snapshots of whatever would come her way] (I. A. Bunin, *Collected Works*, Moscow, 1966, vol.6, p.130)

133.32 pets... an April glade... a sunset skyline

Mira's pictures share the subjects with Gramineev's paintings of the same period (thus somehow depreciating them): "Three Old Friends" (lad, nag, dog), "April Glade"... (127.16). The ember-red sunset skyline provides a heraldic background for the final diorama.

134.3 and the tears, and the stars, and the warm rose-red silk

This rapid reeling off of Pnin's enscrolling private memorandum is a distant echo of the premature series at the onset of the chapter: "and the sounds, and the smells, and the sadness..." (114.7).

134.7 to join briefly the ranks of Denikin's army

Pnin had been a "field telephonist" in the White Army for five months in 1918-1919—see 33.19.

Anton Denikin (1872-1947), Russian General, served in the White forces during the Civil War, first as the chief commander of the Volunteer Army, then commander-in-chief of the Southern Army and the entire White Army.

134.10 she married a fur dealer of Russian extraction

Perhaps, a distant rumble of the Squirrel Theme, absurdly (from a character's, but not the reader's, vantage) linking Mira's maiden name with her husband's occupation through the paramount emblem of the novel.

134.16 she smiled at him... dark brows... bashful shyness

Mira smiled at Pnin in the same "remembered fashion" during his first trance in the novel:

> ...shyly smiling, sleek dark head inclined, gentle brown gaze shining at Pnin from under velvet eyebrows, sat a dead sweetheart of his... (27.24)

134.18 and the contour ... cannot recall

The narration once again slips into the "and-and-and" chant, as it frequently does on an emotional and compositional brink of a chapter. "The outline of verses you know you know but cannot recall" is akin to the unattainable key to Pnin's very existence in the book, the key to its pattern for which Pnin desperately gropes in chapters One, Two, and Three (24.24, 58.9, 79.28).

135.18 burned alive ... pile of beechwood

This image is foreshadowed in 113.33, where a "rooster's cry" came "from a pile of firewood" near a gas station.

135.25 beautifully wooded Grosser Ettersberg

Many themes of the chapter carom back toward the end. The opening paragraphs depicted a wooded landscape of the highland around Mount Ettrick; it is replaced now by the German woods of the "Grosser Ettersberg"—and Ettersburg is the place near Weimar and Buchenwald, where Mira was killed. The "Teutonic" theme is in full swing here. Perhaps, the fiercest assault on the Germans by Nabokov came in his early letter to Wilson (18 July, 1941):

> For almost 25 years Russians in exile have craved for something—anything—to happen that would destroy the Bolsheviks,—for instance, a good bloody war. Now comes this tragic farce. My ardent desire that Russia, in spite of everything, may defeat or rather utterly abolish Germany—so that not a German be left in the world, is putting the cart before the horse, but the horse is so disgusting that I prefer doing so. (*N-W*, 46)

His short story "Conversation Piece, 1945" is a compressed apotheosis of that invective; its "German" part can be reduced to one caustic sentence from another letter to Wilson (February 7, 1944): "one could fancy that one heard the pathetic cry of the submerged, tortured Germany, the gentle, kindly, friendly Germany, pleading for a chance to survive." (Ibid., 129)

135.27 Goethe, Herder, Schiller, Wieland

I notice that they are listed here in alphabetic order.

Nabokov did not care much for Goethe and once called *Faust* an "academic shibboleth" (*N-W*, 214). In his *Nikolai Gogol* he illustrates the notion of *poshlost'* with samples of German Philistinism and singles out

Faust:

> Germany had always seemed to us [Russians] a country where *poshlust* [the early Nabokov's spelling of the word], instead of being mocked, was one of the essential parts of the national spirit, habits, traditions and general atmosphere, although at the same time well-meaning Russian intellectuals of a more romantic type readily, too readily, adopted the legend of the greatness of German philosophy and literature; for it takes a super-Russian to admit that there is a dreadful streak of *poshlust* running through Goethe's *Faust*. (64)

Nabokov once published a Russian version of the Prologue to *Faust* (*Poslednie Novosti*, Paris, December 15, 1932; it is item C370 in Juliar's Bibliography). Goethe makes another brief appearance in this chapter in 112.15.

Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), German critic, was made, through Goethe's mediation, court chaplain and superintendent in Weimar where he lived from 1776 until his death. Johann Christoph Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805), German poet and playwright, settled in Weimar in 1799 to be near Goethe. Christoph Martin Wieland (1733-1813), German poet and novelist. In 1772 he was appointed tutor to the Weimar princes and spent the rest of his life in that city.

135.28 the inimitable Kotzebue

August von Kotzebue (1761-1819), German dramatist, born in Weimar where he was a lawyer. He made a career in the Russian service and was stabbed to death by a German student Karl Sand who thought that Kotzebue was a Tsarist spy (the episode inspired Pushkin's early poem *Kinzhal* [The Dagger], 1820).

This is another curious offshoot of Nabokov's academic endeavor running parallel to his creative writing. *Lovers' Vows* (1798), adapted by Elisabeth Inchbald, English actress and author (1753-1821), from Kotzebue's *Das Kind der Liebe* [The Child of Love], 1788, is the play which the inhabitants of Mansfield Park rehearse in Jane Austen's novel (1814) and which Nabokov discusses in detail in his Cornell lectures on *Mansfield Park* (see *Lectures-R*, 32-35). In a letter to Wilson (November 18, 1950), speaking of the play, Nabokov uses the same sarcastic "inimitable": "...and of course *Lovers' Vows* in Mrs. Inchbald's inimitable translation (a scream)" (*N-W*, 253).

In Chapter Six Dr. Hagen, "the gentlest of souls alive," in a clumsy and pathetic attempt to "sweeten the pill" of the news that Pnin is fired, says: "We are going to stage a Dramatic Program—scenes from Kotzebue to Hauptmann. I see it as a sort of apotheosis..." (168.33).

He even invites Pnin to participate in that program ("I think you should actually play in it, under my daughter's direction," 170.24). Hagen most likely has in view *Das Kind der Liebe*; and there is a faint but distinct

connection between this play and the one in which Pnin had participated during the summer of 1916 and mentioned in 133.3, Schnitzler's *Liebelei* (see n. 178.2). For another possibility, see n. 170.33.

135.29 Dr. Hagen, the gentlest of souls alive

Hagen's appearance here was also foretold at the beginning of the chapter (114.15).

135.33 President of Waindell College ... good men

Nabokov once wrote to Wilson: "The sentence anent the 'synthesis' of the 'rich literary heritage' of Russia and Germany is an insult to the former" (*N-W*, 139).

The Tolstoy Theme, so charged with cross-references in this chapter, comes to a close, too.

Stanislavski, professional name of Konstantin Alekseev (1863-1938), was a Russian actor and producer; he co-founded Moscow Art Theatre with Nemirovich-Danchenko.

Raskol'nikov is the protagonist of Dostoevski's novel *Crime and Punishment*.

136.8 He did not believe ... the quick.

Pnin errs, which may be obvious to the reader but is thoroughly concealed from the characters. See *IN-IV*: 5. Pnin's namesake, the poet Ivan Pnin, in a poem "A Reply to the Question, What is God?", written exactly one hundred years before Nabokov's Pnin was born, exclaims:

> That Being we cannot define!
> But let us worship Him in silence:
> Our minds but fail to solve the riddle—
> To know what God is, one must be a god.

Chapter Six of *SM* closes on the following sentence illuminating, one may suppose, this place in *Pnin*:

> ... a thrill of gratitude to whom it may concern—to contrapuntal genius of human life or to tender ghosts humoring a lucky mortal. (139)

136.13 mosquitoes were getting bothersome.

Pnin's reflections on life's mysteries are once again interrupted—but not by a squirrel as in Chapter Two; this time it is the "bothersome mosquitoes" that avert Pnin's attention from the crucial philosophical riddle he is trying to solve in the course of the novel. For the curious role

W. W. Rowe thinks mosquitoes play in *Ada*, see *Rowe-D*, pp.55-56. Another insect hovers above Pnin's bald head at the most critical point of Chapter Six and perhaps helps somehow to dissipate Pnin's anguish—see n. 172.25.

136.15 On the distant crest ... Pnin's fading day.

The crisis is now over and the last paragraph closes the chapter (just as a similarly vivid one closed Chaper Four) with an ideographic image complete with references to certain themes that have crossed the entire length of the chapter: Pnin's dead sweetheart, the elevated observation point, the pervading mood of quiet sadness and vague promise.

The "easy art" of N—, the autocratic creator of Pnin's world, is responsible, in the penultimate sense (because ultimately he himself is but a fellow character in the same fiction) for whatever has happened to Pnin in the course of that day, now fading.

In his essay on Tiutchev in the *Atlantic*, Edmund Wilson cites a "fine little poem" by E. A. Robinson, which has something in common not only with Tiutchev but also with Chapter Five's finale. Perhaps, it is more than a coincidence: Wilson consulted Nabokov as he was writing that article, and Nabokov provided the English versions of Tiutchev's poems for it. Here is this elegant piece, which does bear a queer resemblance to the halcyon mood of Chapter Five's resolution:

> Dark hills at evening in the West
> Where sunset hovers like a sound
> Of golden chorus that sang to rest
> Old bones of warriors under ground,
> Far now from all the bannered ways
> Where flash the legions of the sun,
> You fade—as if the last of days
> Were fading, and all wars were done.

(*Atlantic Monthly*, January 1944, p.78)

Incidentally, Wilson's article begins with a slip: Tiutchev was four years *younger* than Pushkin, not older.

Chapter Six

First appeared in the *New Yorker* on November 12, 1955, under the title "Pnin Gives a Party," in a substantially abridged version.

137.1 The 1954 Fall Term

Pnin's last semester at Waindell: when the chapter draws to an end he learns that he will have to leave. This chapter, just as all the previous ones, traces a compositional loop.

This is the third chapter in a row that is set in 1954; as already noted, time in *Pnin* becomes compressed toward the end of the novel.

137.2 Humanities Hall received

The New Yorker: "Humanities Hall, Waindell College, received. . . ."

137.5 Parking Problem

The New Yorker: "parking problem."

137.6 in the margins. . . "Description of nature" or "Irony"

Here is a possible source for one of these glosses:

> In the college library copy of this "translation" [Babette Deutsch's of *Evgenii Onegin*, 1936] that I consulted, a poor, misguided, foolish, endearing anonymous college student has dutifully written in pencil the word "Irony" against "better". . . Irony, indeed. (*EO*, iii, 189)

The New Yorker: " 'Description of nature', 'Irony'."

137.7 and in a pretty edition . . . "birds"

A line from Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898) "L'après-midi d'un faune" (1876), "Sans pitié du sanglot dont j'étais encore ivre" [line 92] reverberates, in a sequence of mutations, through *BS* encoding Krug's stifled and thwarted anguish. In his Preface to the novel Nabokov says that Mallarmé "has left three or four immortal bagatelles" (p. xvi), including this one.

The New Yorker: The whole passage does not appear; instead, there is "and 'How true!'."

138.1 Monarch butterflies

Monarch, or Milkweed, or Wanderer Butterfly, is a large lepidopteron (*Danaus plexippus* Linnaeus) known for its migratory habits. The southward migration of the Monarch usually occurs in mid-September, which conveniently fixes the time-setting of Chapter Six.

On Antiterra, there hovers a queer mongrel butterfly called *Nymphalis danaus* Nab.,

> ...orange-brown, with black-and-white foretips, mimicking, as its discoverer Professor Nabonidus of Babylon College, Nebraska, realized, not the Monarch butterfly directly, but the Monarch *through* the Viceroy, one of the Monarch's best known imitators. (*Ada*, 158)

Can there be a quaint resemblance between this mimicry by proxy, this reflected reflection, and one intrinsic feature of *Pnin*'s narration? Does N— not implicitly rely for a number of Pninian anecdotes on Jack Cockerell who, being the "greatest mimic of Pnin on campus" (36), has "acquired an unmistakable resemblance to the man he had been now mimicking for almost ten years" (187)?

The New Yorker: "monarch butterflies."

138.6 the College

The New Yorker: "the college."

138.8 Simone de Beauvoir

For the possible connection between this French authoress and the "Fairview Adult Test" see n. 90.31. The "versatile Starr couple," which will appear shortly, is almost an anagram of the name of de Beauvoir's husband and collaborator, J. P. Sartre. Nabokov considered them both worthless writers and vulgar political ventriloquists. (See his "Sartre's First Try," an incinerating review of *Nausea*, published in *The New York Times Book Review* of 24 April, 1949, and reprinted in *SO*). See n. 142.1 below.

138.9 Stendhal, Galsworthy, Dreiser, and Mann

All four writers represent here the motley international community of what Nabokov called *seredniaki* (mediocrities). Nabokov had often voiced similarly strong opinions long before he collected them in a volume. In a letter to Helen Muchnic of August 18, 1955, Wilson wrote: "Nabokov has just discovered that Stendhal is a complete fraud, and is about to break the news to his class" (quoted by Simon Karlinsky in *N-W*, 296).

Nabokov called Thomas Mann a "quack" (*ibid.*, 148) and "ridiculous" (*ibid.*, 237), and his *Death in Venice* "asinine" (*SO*, 57). In

fact, these four writers, in various combinations, almost always figure on the list of authors Nabokov considered overrated beyond merit. In his afterword to the American edition of *L* he blasts

> ... the Literature of Ideas, which very often is topical trash coming in huge blocks of plaster that are carefully transmitted from age to age until somebody comes along with a hammer and takes a good crack at Balzac, at Gorki, at Mann. (*L*, 317)

And in *SO* the series is augmented by "mediocre and overrated people like Balzac, Dostoevsky, Sainte-Beuve, or Stendhal, that pet of all those who like their French plain" (266), and by "such formidable mediocrities as Galsworthy, Dreiser, a person called Tagore, another called Maxim Gorky, a third called Romain Rolland" (*ibid.*, 57) who "used to be accepted as geniuses" (*idem*).

138.17 the versatile Starr couple

They first appear in Chapter Three (see n. 63.31) and have been turning up ever since in various international guises (see nn. 90.26 and 182.18).

138.22 Tristram W. Thomas

Pnin confuses this professor with Thomas Wynn, the ornithologist, and this sets the scene for a comic situation later in the chapter. It also supplies Jack Cockerell with one more *sujet* for his imitations of Pnin (see n. 187.21).

138.24 Mandoville

A misprint (spelled correctly in the magazine version).

Professor Thomas, a humorless anthropologist, undertakes "many difficult journeys" (155.11). The humorous point is that the *Travels* of "Sir John Mandeville" (1357-71), which was an immensely popular travel book, also happens to be perhaps the most successful forgery of its time.

138.25 the eating habits of Cuban fishermen

Possibly, a reference to Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, a tale of a Cuban fisherman's struggle with a great marlin, written in 1952, which Nabokov liked somewhat more than the rest of Hemingway's stuff excepting "The Killers"* It won the Pulitzer prize in 1953 and a Nobel prize for 1954, the year of Chapter Six. Later in the chapter, N— lends what

* See *SO*, pp.42 and 80, where he calls the thing "a wonderful fish story" and says that he was once asked to translate it into Russian.

seems to be Nabokov's crack at a fresh literary fad to Laurence Clements who adds a political twist to it—see 155.4-5.

138.26 Another charitable...
The New Yorker: "And another charitable...."

138.31 influence of Nietzsche's disciples on Modern Thought
The Nazis maintained that the German philosopher and poet (1844-1900) was an intellectual forerunner of their racist theories (the concept of the "Master Race" etc.).

138.32 And, last but not least ... fascinating graphs.
A late rebound of the Freudian theme in Chapter Four. Pathology defines an aura as a disturbance sometimes preceding an epileptic seizure.

The New Yorker: The entire passage is omitted.

139.7 Dr. Hagen was faced...
The New Yorker: "Dr. Hagen, Chairman of the German Department, was faced... "

139.11 Seaboard, a far more important university...
There is a small town called Seaboard in the NE corner of North Carolina, but no university there.

The New Yorker: "Seaboard University, a far more important seat of learning...."

139.13 easy to solve
The New Yorker: "easy to solve—he would accept.."

139.15 with which Blorenge ... in cultural impact
The New Yorker: omitted, as is every other mention of Blorenge in later sections of this chapter.

139.25 Professor Pnin
The New Yorker: "Professor Timofey Pnin."

139.27 had never been any regular Russian Department
N— plans to establish a "special Russian Division" at Waindell—see 186.17.

139.31 Bodo was sure
The New Yorker: "Bodo von Falternfels, who had grudgingly shared an office with Pnin, was sure. . . ."

139.32 Pnin, who had no life tenure
The New Yorker: "Pnin, who was only an Assistant Professor and had no life tenure. . . ."

140.1 Department
The New Yorker: "department."

140.2 departments that seemed. . . were those of English and French
The New Yorker: "department that was. . . was that of English."

140.4 Chairman of English
The New Yorker: "Chairman of the English Department."

140.5 considered Pnin a joke. . .
The New Yorker: "and considered Pnin a joke."; the rest of this section, as well as the two following, did not appear in the magazine.

140.6 a prominent Anglo-Russian writer
That is, N— himself; he accepts the offer and arrives at Waindell in February of the following year. This is the first time he unequivocally calls himself a writer.

140.25 little burg of Vandel in the Dordogne
I do not see any such town in the Département de la Dordogne (SW France) or, for that matter, anywhere else in France; the nearest Vandel is in Denmark, although there is a borough called Vandéleville some 20 miles south of Nancy (cf. Waindellville, 63.11).

141.3 fireweed
Erechtites hieracifolia, a weed with pinkish flowers growing in burned out areas and clearings.

141.6 wife... referred to him at her club as "Professor Blorenge"
Mrs. Blorenge, along with Betty Bliss, Judith Clyde, and Mrs. Thayer, belongs to that common Philistine species of "club-babble" women that inhabits Nabokov's books and is especially indigenous to *L.* Cf. in particular: "Oh, she [Charlotte] was very genteel... and when talking to her lady-friends referred to me as Mr. Humbert" (77).

141.8 Great Frenchmen
See n. 142.3.

141.11 not represented in the College Library
The magazine does not seem to be represented in *any* library.

141.20 after meeting Pnin socially
Probably, at the Clementses's—see 30.27.

141.21 it is a wonder... to feel rather than to think
This thoughtless semantic aberration is ridiculed in *L:*

> "I have a very definite feeling [says Charlotte] our Louise is in love with that moron." Feeling. "We feel Dolly is not doing as well" etc. (from an old school report). (84)

Cf. *Lectures-R*: "...in such cases we don't *think*, we *feel*" (3).

141.26 Romantic Movement... Chateaubriand and Victor Hugo
Nabokov greatly admired Chateaubriand (1768-1848) but was indifferent to Hugo (1802-1885). However, he mentions them both in the same breath when he discusses Romanticism in his notes to *EO*. He calls them "romantic" only insofar as they used "vivid specific details" (iii, 35).

142.1 Existentialists
Nabokov intensely disliked Sartre, and in his review of *Nausea* called Existentialism "a fashionable brand of café philosophy" (*SO*, 228). See n. 138.8.

142.2 Romain Rolland

Nor did Nabokov think much of this French musicologist and writer (1866-1944). See n. 138.9. However, as a young man, he translated, on a bet with his father, Rolland's novel in verse, *Colas Breugnon* (1918). The translation was first serialized under the title *Nikolka Persik* in the Berlin Russian newspaper *Rul'* [The Rudder], August 29—September 5, 1922; a separate edition came out in Berlin, in 1922.

In his *Translation of the Foreign Terms* appended to the Russian *L*, Nabokov calls Rolland's novel *Jean-Christophe* (1904-1912) "posredstvennyi" (mediocre, p.300).

142.3 General Boulanger and De Béranger

Nabokov calls Pierre Jean de Béranger (1780-1857), French poet and song-writer, a "poetaster" in *EO* (ii, 27), and in the Index to that work surrounds the sham aristocratic *de* in his name with sarcastic quotation marks (an echo of that sarcasm sounds in Blorenge's usage).

Georges Ernest Jean Marie Boulanger (1837-1891), French general, was Minister of War in 1886-87, and was later accused of conspiracy; he commited suicide in exile.

Apart from the fact that their names rhyme, the two Frenchmen have little in common; but then both were evidently included in Blorenge's course "Great Frenchmen" (see 141.8).

I am quite certain that Blorenge's counterpart in *BS*, Professor of French Edmond Beuret, wrote an article on none other than Boulanger:

> [Krug] could not recall the name of that French general, an honest if somewhat limited historical figure who had been driven to suicide by slanderous politicians. (31)

143.8 was totally unaware

Many stringcourse themes of the novel herd together before terminating in Chapter Six. Pnin feels quite happy until the very end of the chapter, just as he was serene and happy when he took the wrong train in the opening chapter. The disaster that awaits him now is far more serious, but the insidiously developing pattern is essentially the same in every chapter: the hero, who at first is blissfully calm, is caught unawares and thrown into utter dejection and acute pain as the chapter progresses, with a possible resolution at the very end.

143.13 and a new organism... approximation

The New Yorker: These two and a half sentences do not appear.

143.21 in manners
The New Yorker: "of manners."

143.23 carelessness
The New Yorker: absent.

143.25 (disinterested, devoted)... this had corrupted Pnin, this...
Pnin and Laurence Clements may be the only true scholars at Waindell. The description of Pnin's research is in sharp contrast with other professors's activities as these are related in the first section of the chapter.

The New Yorker: "had corrupted Pnin and...."

143.27 maniac who disturbs ... even duller one
The New Yorker: "maniac." The rest of the sentence does not appear; instead of "and on another" etc., the magazine version begins a new paragraph with "On another...."

143.31 Todd Road
John Thurston Todd was the Slavist who had stocked the Waindell Library with so many Russian books (see 77.1). This cul de sac, abutting as it does against a "black cliff," is Pnin's last abode in the book. If indeed Nabokov had meant to arrange the scene for Pnin's death at the end of this chapter and later changed his mind (see *IN-I*), then Pnin's last address in the novel may have preserved certain vestiges of that initial plan. Pnin now lives in the "left crotch" of a T crossing, and Bodenstein suggests that the names of both streets, Todd and Cliff, "underline Pnin's precariously located house" ("Tod" meaning death in German—see *Bodenstein*, Appendix 7.11.7). See nn. 145.5 and 151.7.

144.1 It had lodged ... Pnin's house
This is the third and last in the series of extensive architectural descriptions in the book (the first two are in Chapter Four:93.7 and Five:123.8). This one is considerably more functional as it previews the physical details of the scene on which the main event of the chapter, Pnin's party, is to be staged.

The entire paragraph is not present in the *New Yorker* version.

144.19 The sense of living in a discrete building

The feeling must be indeed "singularly delightful" to Pnin in view of the principal condition of human existence stipulated in the opening chapter: discreteness is "one of the main characteristics of life" (20.9).

The theme of Pnin's successively unsatisfactory lodgings also comes to a close now that Pnin finally finds a perfectly comfortable one. He will soon have to abandon all hopes of making it permanent.

144.28 With ... without

The New Yorker: The passage was parenthesized.

144.29 had there been no Russian Revolution

Nabokov said in an interview, "It is not improbable that had there been no revolution in Russia, I would have devoted myself entirely to lepidopterology and never written any novels at all" (*SO*, 100).

Cf. Alfred Appel, Jr., "Nabokov: A Portrait," in *NICOL-RIVERS*, p.18.

144.31 at the best, Timofey!

An important narrator's interpolation: N— makes his presence in this chapter imminent and proximal by the sharply increased frequency of seemingly conventional appellations to his hero. See n. 133.13.

144.33 in Kharkov or Kazan ... without.

Khar'kov, a city in South Ukraine. Kazan', capital of Tataria, on the left bank of the Volga River.

The line "old books within, late blooms without" resembles both metrically and syntactically Andrew Marvell's "The Nymph Complaining for the Death of Her Fawn" (first published in the 1681 Folio), ll.91-92:

> Had it lived long it would have been
> Lilies without, roses within.

Professor Kinbote discusses various translations of this poem (and, specifically, of these verses)—see *PF*, 242.

The New Yorker: "perhaps, in Kharkov or Kazan."

145.4 fifty arshins

A Russian arshin measures about 28 inches. Cf. "two hundred versts,"

8.33 (see note). The Russian term signals the beginning of a Pninized "inner" discourse. N— never resorts directly to the relatively crude interior monologue device which would be totally out of keeping with the novel's narrative concept. This difficult and subtle technique (a signal word temporarily shifting the vantage of narration) allows N— to survey the house, both within and without, through Pnin's eyes and to point up once again that, despite his fourteen years in America, unobservant Pnin still fails to recognize in a bottomless "glorified billiard pocket" hanging over a garage door (145.9), or in a "pennant-shaped red cardboard with the enigmatic word 'Cardinals' daubed on it"(146.13), the obvious features of leisure-time Americana. Cf. his attempt to buy a "football ball" (99).

145.5 limited at the back by a vertical cliff

This black cliff might have been designed as the novel's dead end (see *IN-I*), and insofar as compositionally the chapter is a true cliff-hanger. From this place Pnin will have no way to go but out of the book. See nn. 143.31 and 164.14.

Pnin's move from Creek Street (see 144.2) to Cliff Avenue somehow reminds one of the end of Chapter Three in *G*: "The distance from the old residence to the new was about the same as, somewhere in Russia, that from Pushkin Avenue to Gogol Street." There, the change brings about a stylistic shift reflected in the names of the streets; here, it has to do with thematic evolution (the creek behind Pnin's house turns into a violent stream carrying the "unwanted football" in the finale of Chapter Four, p.109).

145.9 curious basketlike net ... suspended for some reason

Pnin's perception zone blends here with the narrator's who khows perfectly well what this net is—see n.145.4.

145.13 Pheasants cliff

The New Yorker: The sentence does not appear.

145.15 Lilacs—those Russian garden graces

Commenting on the Larins's park's flora, Nabokov mentions

> one of those Russian floreta that were so prominent in Russian country places, bushes of lilacs *Syringa vulgaris* L[innaeus], first imported from Asia, via Turkey and Austria, in the sixteenth century, an emancipated relative of the utilitarian olive... (*EO*, ii, 406)

145.16 springtime splendor... my poor Pnin greatly looked forward

N— knows well enough that "his poor Pnin" is not going to see another spring at Waindell. For more on this "narratorial possessive" see n. 133.13.

145.18 tall deciduous tree... identify... heart-shaped leaves...

The tree is most probably one of the genus *Morus*. Cf. *Ada*: "...a princely paulownia ("mulberry tree!" snorted Ada) ... was shedding generously its heart-shaped dark green leaves..." (522)

See n. 111.8.

145.23 cranky-looking furnace... weak warm breath...

The trouble Nabokov's heroes usually have with heating systems is matched only by their woes with sound insulation. Cf. *PF*:

> The heating system was a farce, depending as it did on registers in the floor wherefrom the tepid exhalations of a throbbing and groaning basement furnace were transmitted to the rooms with the faintness of a moribund's last breath. (19)

145.31 with a discolored all over Poland

The former inhabitant of the house (or, perhaps, Martin Sheppard himself) must have been a Polonophile: prior to the revolution of 1917 Poland was part of the Russian Empire.

The New Yorker: The sentence does not appear.

145.32 where Pnin contemplated ... for his guests

The New Yorker: omitted.

145.33 pair of crystal ... iridescent reflections

One of the last coruscating appearances of the Reflection-Refraction theme. See n. 153.25.

146.3 and reminded... stained-glass casements...

Painful and fond reminiscences do not plague Pnin in this chapter as much as they have before. But see n. 147.8.

In *Drugie berega*, "...stained glass of the veranda is reproduced much too vividly in the mind brimming with the sunlight" (64).

See also the passage about the "harlequin pattern of colored panes" in *SM*, 106-7.

The New Yorker: "reminding... stained glass."

146.13 pennant-shaped... enigmatic word "Cardinals."
Pnin, the "kroket" and "gorodki" champion, is naturally alien to baseball (see n.145.4). Before the chapter's year, 1954, the St. Louis Cardinals had last won the National League title in 1946 (and proceeded to win the World Series by defeating Boston four games to three).

146.15 a tiny rocker
See n. 55.14.

146.22 He was ... that party
The New Yorker: "Timofey was ... a housewarming party."

146.23 sofa... two wing-back chairs... a chair with a rush seat
The stage is being furnished for the forthcoming play, *The Party*. Though Pnin initially wanted to invite more people, he ends up with seven guests (and ten seats).

The New Yorker: "a wing-back chair two chairs with rush seats." Following "footstools" there was a sentence "He had planned a buffet supper, which he would serve in the dining room.."

146.27 list of his guests.
The New Yorker: "list of his guests—the Clementses, the Hagens, the Thayers, and Betty Bliss.."

146.29 real people
See n. 154.4.

146.33 many a good turn
The irony is that an awful turn is lying in store for Pnin, and it is precisely Herman Hagen who will break the bad news.

147.3 her husband had

The New Yorker: "her husband of the English Department had...." The passage beginning with "But there was nothing..." (147.6), up to "gone home" (147.19), followed the sentence ending with "delighted to come" (147.25), with these variations:

147.15 "the lone buzz in his ears" replaced "the time";
147.17 "he emerged" was "he had emerged";
147.19 "had already gone" was "had gone";
147.21 "he ran into Betty, asked her" replaced "he had run into Betty Bliss, a former student of his, and had asked her to the party"
147.22 "she said" was "she had said."

147.8 those birthday parties ... the lone buzz ... wardrobe.

For the third time in the course of this chapter Pnin retrieves a well preserved image from his past (see 146.3 and 146.8). Nabokov recollects a similar sensation: " the singing in my ears—that lonesome vibration so familiar to small boys in dusty hiding places." (*SM*, 23).

The feeling of "constraining dullness" does overcome Pnin at the end of the chapter when his guests are gone and, all alone, he gloomily examines the draff and dregs each of them has left behind (p.171). The china closet says "boom-boom-boom" as he passes by (171.10).

147.23 Turgenev's prose poem

See n. 42.25.

147.25 He asked the celebrated mathematician

Bodenstein's conjecture that the mathematician's name is suggestive because he " 'idles on' rather than coming to Pnin's party" (*Bodenstein*, Appendix 7.11) seems terribly forced.

The New Yorker: "Pnin, returning to his unsatisfactory list of guests, decided to invite the celebrated mathematician...."

147.26 the sculptress, and they said...

The New Yorker: "the sculptress. He called them up and they said...."

147.29 He asked young Miller, by now an Associate Professor

Pnin never comes to attain this rank at Waindell. Miller was "one of the younger members of the German Department" in Chapter One (15.4)

and Three (69.8).

The New Yorker: "He next asked Miller, a young instructor in the German Department."

147.32 He asked old Carrol... iambics... friends

Nabokov's own *Notes on Prosody*, appended to his commentaries to *Evgenii Onegin*, are limited to a comparative analysis of the English and Russian iambic tetrameter.

The New Yorker: The entire passage is absent.

148.11 He was about to give up ... his list, when...

The New Yorker: "The party was to be the next day and he was about to ask the Cockerells when...."

It is, perhaps, important that Jack Cockerell should not be invited to Pnin's benefit and thus has to settle for second-hand imitations (see pp.187-88).

148.14 Pnin and I

N—'s incursions have become increasingly more persistent and revealing in the last two chapters, in order to prepare the complete take-over and the radical shift in perspective accomplished in the final chapter.

148.15 one could find not only a person... a twin within...

The New Yorker: "one was likely to find at least one person... who was the twin so far as looks went of another man within...."

148.19 comparatively small college ... Frank Reade

Perhaps, the most arrant instance of a real person's intromission into the fictitious world of *Pnin* (see n. 122.15). In a letter of November 3, 1942, Nabokov wrote to Wilson that he had met, on his lecture tour, "most charming and brilliant people (especially ... the president of G[eorgia] S[tate] C[ollege for] W[omen] Frank Reade)" (*N-W*, 85-86).

And Mrs. Nabokov recalls that the absurd remark by Waindell President Poore (135.32) had been originally made by the Georgia College President.

The Narrator's digression was omitted in the *New Yorker*.

148.22 and I recall the late Olga Krotki once telling me that...

Olga Krotki and her husband are mentioned in Chapter One (10.32, implicitly) and Two (39.15).

The New Yorker: "and I remember that..."; "Intensive Language School" (line 24) was not capitalized.

148.24 at which ... Lethean and Fenugreek

Lethe, river in Hades in Greek mythology; its water when drunk caused forgetfullness of the past.

Fenugreek (literally, "Greek hay") is an Asiatic herb (*Trigonella foenum-graecum*).

One can extricate from this somewhat bitter tasting pair of hybrid words quite a number of languages (Latin, Lettish, Lithuanian, Finnish, and Greek), as well as the entire Finno-Ugric family.

The New Yorker: omitted.

148.28 not a very observant man

Cf. 65.6 and 128.7.

149.6 Thomas Wynn, Head

The name yields an easy and convenient pun (T. Wynn—twin) for which Pnin, an inveterate amateur punster, predictably falls (see 149.12 and 150.9).

"Head" was not capitalized in the *New Yorker*.

149.8 gay golden orioles, melancholy cuckoos and other...

The New Yorker: "golden orioles and other...."

149.10 into somebody else, whom Pnin did not know

Namely, into Tristram W. Thomas, Professor of Anthropology (see n. 138.22). Owing to a singular coincidence, Pnin mistakes him for the Ornithologist, Thomas Wynn, and invites him to his party. The possibility of this quid pro quo was suggested as early as in Chapter Three: "...Humanities Hall, where, however, Ornithology and Anthropology also lurked..." (70.11).

149.12 foreigner's fondness for puns

Humbert Humbert makes this remark about Gaston Godin: "... as he put it with a foreigner's love for such things: 'Not to spell very well, but to smell very well'" (*L*, 179).

In *N-W*, the motif of puns turns up with certain regularity over the years. Wilson chided Nabokov for what he deemed as his *jeu de mots* indulgence. In his very first letter to Nabokov (November 12, 1940, concerning VN's review) Wilson wrote,

> Another thing: do please refrain from puns, to which I see you have a slight propensity. They are pretty much excluded from serious journalism here. (29)

Next year, he again frowns upon Nabokov's "lamentable weakness for punning" (*ibid.*, 49). Consequently, Nabokov actually apologises a few times in the course of their correspondence for dropping a casual pun, e.g. "And now we come to Ilyitch—and here I itch (sorry)" (32), or "I am too old to change Conradically (this is a *good* one)" (44).

Cf. 151.4.

149.33 When the new ... in unraveling the T. Wynns.

The passage does not appear in the *New Yorker* version.

150.7 disconcerting likenesses he alone had seen

For example, the meddlesome gasoline station attendant who reminded Pnin of Hagen ("one of those random likenesses as pointless as a bad pun"—see n. 114.15). And in Chapter Six, Hagen momentarily acquires a not so strange resemblance to Eric Wind (162.24). See also n. 154.19.

The theme of arbitrary resemblances and false doubles runs the length of *Despair*, where Herman considers another man his perfect twin while nobody else seems to notice the similarity. On the other hand, Cockerell, through his frequent impersonations of Pnin, achieves an opposite and hardly expected effect, driving the resemblance to its absurd extreme and becoming himself, in a sense, a more authentic Pnin than his model (see 189.3)—much as N—'s Pnin is "more authentic" than Pnin is willing to admit.

150.10 On the day of his party, as he...

The New Yorker: "By great good luck, on the day of the party, as Pnin...."

150.15 a magazine article on birds

The mention of birds is unfortunate because Pnin immediately and erroneously concludes that his interlocutor must be the Ornithologist, whereas he is actually an anthropologist interested in local customs, not birds.

150.19 I don't remember

The New Yorker: "I don't recall."

150.21 Skoff region, I hope I pronounce it right

Professor Thomas mispronounces *Pskov* (a city in Northern Russia) exactly the way Sheppard garbles Pnin's name (107.28)—by omitting the initial "p" before a consonant: Pnin—Neen (as in "pneumonia"); Pskov—Skoff (as in "psoriasis"). Other American characters in the book do preserve the "p" by inserting a schwa after it: "Professor Pun-neen. I hope I have it right" (says Miss Clyde, 26.24, see note). One wonders if an easy pun (scoff) may not be semi-intended here.

150.23 the symbol is phallic

This anthropologist is evidently of the Freudian persuasion, very well established in that discipline.

150.27 he said with a note

The New Yorker: "Pnin said, a note. . . ."

150.28 his way to pin down

The New Yorker: "his way not only to carry out his brilliant idea but also to pin down. . ." (the "brilliant idea" was to enliven his guest list).

150.32 the English name

The English name of this bird is skylark; the Latin, *Alauda arvensis*.

151.2 house-heating soiree

An example of Pnin's characteristic misusage.

151.7 nine hundred ninety nine . . . very simple

This number functions in both Nabokov's novels adjoining *Pnin*.

John Shade's poem "Pale Fire" consists of 999 lines (the first one rhyming with the last and thus forming a seamless circle), while in his poem "The Nature of Electricity" (already quoted in n. 14.2) there is the following quatrain:

> Streetlamps are numbered, and maybe
> Number nine-hundred-ninety-nine
> (So brightly beaming through a tree
> So green) is an old friend of mine. (*PF*, 192)

And in the book preceding *Pnin*, Lolita creates one of the best metaphors of the spatial concept of Time Irreversible (discussed at length in *Ada*'s Part Four, in *LATH*, passim, and mentioned in my *IN-IV*: 3 and 5):

> Oh, look, all the nines are changing into the next thousand. When I was little kid, she continued unexpectedly, I used to think they'd stop and go back to nines, if only my mother agreed to put the car into reverse (221).*

A character's life in a novel does not end in the void "as we all must" (69) but loops over and over like digits in the odometer. The ominous zero which an anonymous girl dials instead of the letter O in "Signs and Symbols" (*ND*, 74) may spell a catastrophe; the triple O of the three New Wye lakes (Omega-Ozero-Zero**) points not only to the length of Shade's "Pale Fire" but also to its contents (essay on man's death) and its structure (symmetrical and circular, where line 999 + line 1 = line "1000").

The New Yorker: "999."

151.9 Cleef Ahvnue. A leetle breek ... cleef.

This bleat is the longest stretch of Pnin's garbled English faithfully reproduced in the book.

The New Yorker: "Cliff Ahvnue. A little brick house with a big black cliff behind..."

*Memory does the trick, and H.H. registers that this was the first time that Lolita remembered aloud something from her pre-Humbertian past. Thus this crotchety passage solves the problem while stating its insolubility, for the deeper implication appeals to the reader, while it remains unnoticed by the narrator.

Preparing this MS for publication I noticed that in his recent book Pekka Tammi spotted this "shared number" in all three novels (see *Tammi*, 353), and so he deserves the credit for establishing the connection.

**Cf. Lake Onkwedo, Lake Ohrida, and Lake Onega in the previous chapter of our novel. See n. 120.12.

151.11 That afternoon...

Beginning with Section Six, the chapter turns into an eight-act play, with the action limited to Pnin's house (within and without, as in old Russian plays), the time, to that particular evening, and the personae, to Pnin and his seven guests. This little drama staged within the larger one of the chapter has its own prostasis (Section 6), catastasis (Sections 7 to 11), catastrophe (section 12), and a cathartic slaking (section 13). It can be said, generally, that each chapter and the entire corpus of the novel follow certain rather stringent dramatic conventions (see *IN-IV*: 1-2).

152.1 Gretchen-like coil of thick hair... maid's mind

Gretchen is the German version of Ophelia in Goethe's *Faust*. See Nabokov's letter No.79 to Wilson (p.129).

Betty Bliss represents the *poshlost'* theme in the novel (and so does Mrs. Thayer in this chapter). The scar on her throat was probably a souvenir of her "hopelessly complicated ... affair with a cripple..." (42.17).

152.9 which had remained unaltered ... Nothing...

The New Yorker: "which he soon found had remained unaltered..."; "... basis. Nothing..." (line 11) was merged: "... basis, and nothing...."

152.14 small-town women... tap on the sleeve... your wrist.

This is shared by Charlotte Haze: "...said the lady letting her hand rest for a moment upon my sleeve..." (*L*, 40), and, oddly, by Lucette Veen (although in a different version): "Slapping a person's wrist that way is not your prettiest mannerism on the Irish side" (*Ada*, 466). I can trace this gesture back to a passage in the story "The Passenger" (already quoted in another connection—see n. 25.30): " 'I know your manner,' said the critic, touching his interlocutor's shoulder with the tips of his fingers and in a gesture peculiar to him, instantly snatching back his hand." *DS*, p.79.

152.26 and to rinse three large bunches of grapes

The New Yorker: omitted.

152.29 and some... and hot...

The New Yorker: "some... hot...." "And four kinds of nuts" does not appear; instead, there was "and a bowl of fruit and nuts" following "sweets."

153.2 Pnin's Punch

Yet another punning possibility, probably followed up implicitly in 158.11, 167.6, and certainly in 171.12. Cf. "the famous Sirinian punch" (*N-W*, 271).

153.10 from Victor ... it had come

The New Yorker: "from young Victor." Instead of the passage beginning "Yes, how was he" and ending "It had come..." (line 23), there went the following one: "...his former wife's son by a second marriage. Victor was at St. Bartholomew's, a boarding school at Cranton, near Boston, and Timofey had never met the boy until last spring, when his mother, who lived in California, had arranged to have Victor spend his Easter vacation with Pnin at Waindell. The visit proved a success and was followed by the arrival of this bowl...."

153.22 The bowl... colored image, a blazoned blur...

Pnin serves his Punch in this bowl which, against all odds, emerges unbroken in the final section and graces the chapter (which, technically, is Pnin's last) with a sparkling and victorious emblem.

153.30 is unknown

The New Yorker: "is unknown. Timofey was using the precious bowl for the first time tonight, he told Betty.."

154.1 A musical tinkle ... the Clementses entered

They had entered the novel to the accompaniment of "musical chimes"—and Pnin's telephone call shortly thereafter (see the beginning of Chapter Two, pp.29-31).

154.4 Dark-blue-eyed, long-lashed, bob-haired Joan wore...

Joan Clements is one of the very few people in Waindell whose company Pnin does enjoy and whom he calls "real" (see 146.29).

Cf. Nabokov's description of Anna Karenin: "...her motions were rapid. Everything about her was elegant, charming and real" (*Lectures-R*, 227).

Joan was earlier said to have a "brisk long-limbed" gait (31.9).

The New Yorker: "Dark-eyed, long-limbed, bob-haired Joan Clements wore...."

154.10 Laurence, fatter than ever, dressed in nice gray flannels

The New Yorker: "her husband, Laurence, a nice fat Professor of Philosophy in a nice gray flannel suit. . . ." The "easy chair" in the next line was "the easiest chair."

154.16 to check but now could not remember

The New Yorker: "to look up."

154.19 Canon van der Paele

Another "striking resemblance," with which Chapter Six is particularly replete (see n. 150.7). This case is especially interesting because it is N— who notices the likeness first, while Laurence chances upon an album of Flemish Masterpieces and starts absent-mindedly thumbing through it much later (see 160.19). De Vries finds that the artist has made the good Canon look very much like "Nabokov himself, *especially when one thinks of the photo of Horst Tappe*" ("Pnin: Mirrors and Doubles": *VNRN*, 18 [Spring 1987], p.55, my italics).

The Altarpiece by Jan van Eyck, often called "The Madonna with Canon van der Paele" (1436) is in the Bruges Musée Communal des Beaux-Arts. It depicts the Virgin and Child in the back-center; the kneeling Canon to the right, St. George in a cuirass standing behind him; and St. Donatian to the left. The Canon's name was George, which explains the choice of Saint to present him to the Madonna. The Canon, however, is looking in the general direction of St. Donatian who is dressed in royal attire. Van der Paele became canon in 1410 and died in 1443. He donated this painting to the Church of St. Donatian (where Jan van Eyck was to be buried). St. George on the oil can hardly be called a "super": the richness and thoroughness of detail, especially that gleam on the helmet he so amusingly tips slightly, are quite magical. In the words of Fromentin, "when one gives this picture one's full attention, it is a world that makes one forget everything else and makes one think that art has nothing more to say" (*Les Maîtres d'autrefois: Belgique*, Paris, 1876)

For more on this painting see n. 162.7. On Van Eyck see n. 97.32.

154.26 than Betty

The New Yorker: "when Betty."

154.27 Pnin was about to say "Professor Vin"...

Had Pnin been given a chance to call his guest that way, the whole misunderstanding would have been resolved at once. The simple mechanism of the confusion hinges on the fact that, apart from their

alleged likeness, the ornithologist's first name (Thomas) happens to be the anthropologist's last name; moreover, the latter is nicknamed "Tom."

154.30 Tim Pnin returned to the kitchen

This is also unfortunate, since while Pnin is out of the room Thomas's field becomes apparent in the casual exchange between him and Laurence ("interviewing palm-climbing fishermen"—the joke is N—'s, not Laurence's: see next note).

155.4 in Havana interviewing palm-climbing fishermen

Laurence paraphrases N— who said earlier that anthropologist T.W. Thomas had received a grant from the "Mandeville Foundation" to study "the eating habits of Cuban fishermen and palm climbers." See n.138.25 for a possible literary allusion.

155.12 Windward Islands

A group of islands in the Lesser Antilles, West Indies.

155.13 Senator McCarthy ... on foreign travel

Joseph Raymond McCarthy (1908-1957), Senator from Wisconsin (1947-1957), famous for his fierce anti-Communist activity.

Professor Thomas, by the way, also resembles another professor from another Nabokov's book:

> He was so-called Pink, who believed in what so-called Pinks believe in (Progressive Education, the Integrity of anyone spying for Russia, Fall-outs occasioned solely by US-made bombs, the existence in the near past of a McCarthy Era...) (*PF*, 266)

155.20 such grand things as dining with one's boss... a duchess.

Poshlost' as a theme, of the kind represented by Betty Bliss, is fairly evenly distributed throughout the chapter (mark the description of a series of similar grimaces and gestures of Mrs. Thayer who is another major exponent of this theme: 156.12 and 164.8).

The adjective "grand" is a signal word in *L* delimiting a special Philistine speech zone, as in "It was a grand morning" (p.91, quoth Jean Farlow); "a grand person, Mrs. Haze" (p. 37); "it's really grand" (p.268, Lolita's parlance).

This sort of "awed recognition" is also recorded in *BS*: "...the respect a business magnate evokes in his own town..." (10). Cf. Nabokov's discourse on *poshlost'*:

> Or else he [the *poshliac*] craves to... delight in the knowledge that there is the head of a corporation or a European count sitting next to him... He is thrilled by riches and rank: "Darling, I've actually talked to a duchess." (*Lectures-R*, 310-11)

Cf. also in Chapter Two, "The Reverend Hopper's wife was the niece of an English Earl" (says Liza, 54.4).

155.23 The Thayers, who came... presented... hearty Hagen

The New Yorker: "The last to arrive were the Thayers... and presented...." In the next line, "Dr. Hagen... triumphantly held" was "and Dr. Hagen... and triumphantly held...." Hagen's greeting ("Good evening") was doubled, not trebled, in the magazine version.

155.32 had perceptibly ... streaking down it. Mrs Hagen... coming

The New Yorker: "... a square-shouldered, aging man, explained that Mrs. Hagen..." In line 7, "alas" followed "coming."

156.8 Flamingo tails... he slyly quipped.

For Pnin's puns see n. 149.12.

The New Yorker: "...he slyly quipped, looking, as he supposed, at his friend Vin."

156.11 her linear eyebrows... genteel inquiry

Cf. nn. 155.20 and 164.8.

The New Yorker: "her eyebrows...."

156.15 she was the provincial cousin of... Joan.

The contrast between the "real" Joan and the genteel Margaret Thayer finds a parallel in Joan's remark that the Cockerells's pitcher is a "poor relation" to Victor's bowl (158.6).

156.24 If you drew... a black pipe...

For a Roy Thayer look-alike in Chapter Five, see 100.5.

156.30 an overgrazed pasture... the trickle of a brook...

Nabokov disfavored the poetry of the eighteenth century whether

French, Russian, or English, the latter with the possible exception of Pope and some of Swift. Compare the bucolic metaphor used here to a similar one in Nabokov's note to "Onegin's Journey": "Clouds masked the moon and brooks murmured in pastoral poesy..." (*EO*, iii, 290).

157.5 avoided, in fact, talking ... poetasters

The New Yorker: does not appear.

157.11 and for all I know ... might be right.

The New Yorker: does not appear.

157.16 I have to report ... awaiting us.

This little monologue nicely epitomizes Pnin's scholarly meticulousness, his unflappable pedantry, his natural instinct for peculiar faux pas, and, of course, his pompous English ("tapped on the typewriting machine" is a word-for-word rendition of the Russian *otstukal na pishushchei mashinke*).

157.24 Presently, guests ... drifted back

After their introduction in the preceding section, the guests reappear, rearranged, on stage several times each in the five sections, or "scenes," that follow.

158.3 Look at this writhing pattern.

This signal phrase sounds and functions almost like a password in Nabokov's last novel, *Look at the Harlequins*. See the "recurrence of certain situations" (see n. 159.23) and especially the "recurrent design" of the *New Yorker* version (quoted in n. 173.1).

158.5 Lake Dunmore pitcher

It is not clear whether Joan means Irish or Old American glasswork here. There is a similar water-pitcher ("probably, South Jersey, 1833-42," says *The Oxford Companion to the Decorative Arts*, 1975, p.410) in the Chicago Art Institute. Another close approach would be the "lily-pad pitcher, attributed to Lancaster or Lockport glassworks, New York, 1840-1860" (see *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 14th ed., vol. 10, pl. viii).

By a curious coincidence, there is a borough by the name of Dunmore in NE Pennsylvania, three miles south of Scranton (Victor bought the bowl in "Cranton").

158.10 Primo... secundo...

The passage is another example of Pnin's pedantic and precise scholarship that went unappreciated by his guests (excepting, perhaps, Laurence Clements).

The bookish *primo-secundo* is also used by Humbert Humbert—see *L*, 53.

The New Yorker: "that" was omitted after "secundo."

158.12 Cendrillon's shoes... vair... verre... veveritsa...

"Cendrillon, ou la Petite pantoufle de verre" was included in the *Histoires et Contes du Temps Passé* (1697) by Charles Perrault (1628-1703).

That the "verre" (glass) of the title should really be "vair" (miniver) has been suspected by many a scholar. Though *vair* is usually assumed to be derived from the Latin *varius* (variegated) it may indeed be traced to *viverra*, Latin for ferret. See a brilliant discourse on *vair* in Nabokov's works in Peter Lubin's "Kickshaws and Motley," especially his observation that "*vair* is a party-colored fur of heraldry, properly azure and argent. It recalls the very title *BS*..." (*Lubin*, p.206).

Veveritsa, or *bela veveritsa*, is a Russian fur, *gornostai* (miniver, or ermine) or *belka* (squirrel; the last faint echo of the sciurine theme in the "discoursive" part of the novel). J. Endzelin thinks that the word is somehow connected with *ver-*, to bend, having to do with the squirrel's crooked tail (see Vasmer, op.cit., vol. 1, p.282). Cf. n. 88.30.

Nabokov steadfastly held this theory about Cinderella's shoes.* Here are several examples from his novels:

> ...she rushed down the corridor and lost a miniver-trimmed slipper on the grand staircase, like Ashette in the English version. (*Ada*, 114)

> ...a girl's tiny slipper trimmed with moth-eaten squirrel fur... (*BS*, 125)

In his poem, Humbert says of Lolita, "her eyes were *vair*" (258). But *Ada* stocks a few pairs of glass shoes as well—see, for example, p.12 ("...holding the glass slipper that his fickle lady had left him..." or p.374. And in his extensive note to stanza xxxiii of Canto One of *Evgenii Onegin*, Nabokov twice mentions the "glass shoes" which might or might not fit the "nozhki" [Rus. caressive for feet] of Pushkin's verse (see *EO*, ii, pp.120 and 129).

* Cf. an echo of that tradition in a gloss by Ariadna Efron, the Russian poet Marina Tsvetaev's daughter, in a letter to Pasternak of November 9, 1951: "Cinderella's crystal slipper should be morocco [?]—*vair* instead of *verre*." (*Pis'ma iz ssylki* [Letters from Exile], Paris, 1982, p.117).

By a singular coincidence, on the preceding page (119) of his commentaries, Nabokov discusses various misspellings of the title of Gresset's poem, one of them being *Vairvert* (green miniver?), which serves to illustrate quite nicely the vicissitudes of the principle of "the survival of the fittest words" (and misprints). For Gresset and his *Vert-Vert*, see n. 44.22. For the fairy-tale motifs in Nabokov, see Appel's note in *L*, 346-347.

See also *Nicol*, pp.199-202, on the Glass—Squirrel connection.

158.19 columbine... columba... somebody well knows

Vasmer argues that the derivation of the Russian *golub'* (pigeon) from the Latin *columba* is phonetically impossible (op.cit., vol. 1, p.433).

"Sizlly" (instead of the correct "sizly" or "sizyi"), Russian for slate-blue, is a misprint in the hardcover and all subsequent paperback editions. It is, however, spelled correctly in the *New Yorker*.

By "somebody" Pnin means Thomas the "Ornithologist."

The New Yorker: "from *columba*, Latin for 'pigeon,' as somebody here well knows" was omitted.

158.20 so you see, Mrs. Fire, you were...

The New Yorker: " 'So you see, Mrs. Fire,' he concluded, 'you were...'."

158.23 This beverage ... delicious.

Calling punch "beverage" and using the commercially smacking "delicious" in this combination is typical of Mrs. Thayer's mawkish speech.

158.25 (I always thought... some sort of a flower...)

Professor Thomas is no botanist, either. The columbine is a plant of the genus *Aquilegia*, but when Nabokov mentions it he invariably means not the reddish *A. canadensis* of eastern N. America but the bluish-flowered *A. coeruela* of the Rocky Mountains, the State flower of Colorado where the Nabokovs spent many summers collecting butterflies.

Cf. *Ada*, "Alpine Columbine, color of your eyes" (p.8), and *SM*, "a paradise of lupines, columbines, and pentstemons" (p.138).

The passage in parentheses, along with the rest of the section, does not appear in the *New Yorker* version.

158.28 Victor would be fifteen soon.

This "soon" seems a little queer here: after all, Victor will be fifteen in June, 1955 (see nn. 47.2 and 87.6), and it is now the fall of 1954 (probably, September).

159.1 gracious old lady, Dorianna Karen

This is an important but somehow overlooked link in the chain of spectacular coincidences of the "life-aping-art" sort, verging on sheer clairvoyance. The actress Dorianna Karenina figures in Chapter Twenty Three of *LD*, and in the August, 1970, interview with Alfred Appel Nabokov said,

> In the novel there is a film in which my heroine is given a small part, and I would like my readers to brood over my singular power of prophecy, for the name of the leading lady (Dorianna Karenina) in the picture invented by me in 1931 prefigured that of the actress (Anna Karina) who was to play Margot forty years later in the film *LD*... (*SO*, 162; see a slightly modified version of this statement in Nabokov's almost simultaneous note to Dabney Stuart's contribution to Nabokov's Festschrift, 1970)

The British-French film *Laughter in the Dark*, directed by Tony Richardson, was released in 1969. Anna Karina (b.1941) is a Danish actress who has played leading roles in French films.

It seems odd that Nabokov should have failed to mention the intermediate appearance of the actress in *Pnin*, even if under a slightly apocopated name Dorianna Karen, which actually brings it still closer to the real actress's name.

159.16 soirée going on so nicely

The New Yorker: "soirée's going so nicely."

159.23 and of interrupting... recurrence of certain situations

Joan's question, perched inconspicuously on a remote branch of a long period, displays an amazingly astute insight into the true and secret recess of the novel's structure (and, as she aptly observes, of "practically all of his novels"). Just as in Chapter Five Russian émigrés talk about the works of V. Sirin, here, in the American intellectual milieu, the novels of the "prominent Anglo-Russian writer" are being discussed. The involute subtlety here is that this writer, Vladimir Vladimirovich N—, happens to be the narrator and inventor of the very book in which Joan Clements and Roy Thayer appear as characters. How did this crucial dialogue start? Did the well-bred, sociable Joan try to strike up a conversation with the boorish, taciturn Thayer by praising once again the beautiful bowl? Did that lead her, for the second time this evening (see 158.4), to the Cockerells,

and to a question about Jack, Thayer's colleague in the English Department? Did Thayer mention Jack's intention to avail the department of V. V. N—'s services (see 140.6)? At this point, the casual exchange could turn to the discussion of N—'s novels to which Thayer was apparently indifferent, whereupon Joan might come up with her astounding "But don't you think..." Those interpolating "haws" of hers (also recurrent) dilute, but thereby also punctuate, her paramount conjecture, diverting the reader's attention from what she is saying to the manner in which she says it. In fact, her semi-question, an invitation to agree with her, is given ostensibly and quite deliberately as a random illustration of that peculiar panting diction of hers which she acquires when she gets "a little high as she was now."

The "fantastic recurrence of certain situations," or the reappearance of disguised and conjoined themes, is the principal feature of *Pnin*'s composition and of Nabokov's novelistic art in general. In one of his lectures on Jane Austen Nabokov says that thematic lines are "images or an idea which is repeated here and there in the novel, as a theme reoccurs in a fugue" (*Lectures*, 16, fn.).

See *IN-IV*: 1-2.

W. Carroll, in his otherwise admirably perceptive article referred to earlier, fails to recognize the sly Narrator's swift reflection in Joan's shrewd remark ("an unknown author"—see *Carroll*, 214).

The New Yorker: This passage is omitted, as are most others containing obvious references to the author.

160.1 Hagen, carefully avoiding... what is comical in it.

The New Yorker: "Hagen told him and the grinning Thomas a bit of campus gossip."

160.7 your chaste ears, Timofey

This note has already sounded twice in the novel: "prim Pnin would cover his front stud with a chaste hand" (8.18), and "I'll lie on your virgin bed, Timofey" (54.25).

160.15 thirty-five years ago in Odessa

The stops on Pnin's way out of Russia become known gradually as the novel progresses (St. Petersburg—Kiev—the White Army retreating to the South—Odessa—the Crimea—Constantinople). In Odessa, Pnin's friend Vanya Bednyashkin was shot by the invading Bolsheviks in 1919, or exactly "thirty-five years ago"—see 27.31.

160.18 At still later stage of the party...

As noted, these last sections of the chapter are staged in compliance with specific dramatic rules (dialogues abound; the unity of place and time is strictly observed; each actor is accorded, in turn, about the same attention in each section, etc.).

160.20 was flipping ... "Flemish Masterpieces"

All things considered, I am inclined to pick, from a great many art books on the subject that Liza could have given to Victor, a book entitled *The Last Flowering of the Middle Ages* by Baron Joseph van der Elst (Garden City, N.Y., 1945), which reproduces a fragment of Van Eyck's painting (see n. 162.5). Two other possible (but less likely, given the date of publication) candidates among English-language albums containing a reproduction of the Canon van der Paele's portrait are: *Flemish Art* by Roger Fry (New York, 1927, fig.6) and *Flemish Painting before the Eighteenth Century* by Sir Paul Lambotte (London, 1927, pl. xi and xii, where the picture is reproduced in full).

The New Yorker: "was now flipping"; "that Victor..." was "which Victor...."

160.24 wondering ... feelings

The New Yorker: does not appear.

160.27 You may laugh... denying the charge... provoking his glee.

Cf. *Ada*: "'... it will make you smile' (it did not: that prediction is seldom fulfilled)." (371)

In our case, it *is* fulfilled but in a special way: Laurence smiles, of course, not at Hagen's stock apophasis but at his having found Van Eyck's painting he has long been looking for (see n. 162.5).

The New Yorker: "passed album to his wife" instead of "passed album to Joan."

161.1 You may laugh, but I affirm

The New Yorker: "'You may laugh', he continued to the others, 'but I affirm...'."

161.2 just a drop, Timofey: that will do

This cup-bearing aside recalls a similar interjection in *Evgenii Onegin*:

> Nalei eshchio mne pol-stakana...
> Dovol'no, milyi...
>
> [Pour me another half a glass...
> That'll do, my dear...]
> (iv, 48)

The essentially dramatic technique of interference employed here and elsewhere in the novel (see n. 106.24) is one of Nabokov's favorite devices. In his lectures on *Anna Karenin*, Nabokov points out, with admiration, a similar, though rudimentary, attempt on Tolstoy's part:

> "Have you been here long?" [Kitty] said, shaking hands with him. "Thank you," she added, as he picked up the handkerchief that had fallen out of her muft." (Tolstoy keeps a keen eye on his characters. He makes them speak and move—but their speech and motion produce their own reaction in the world he has made for them...). (*Lectures-R*, 161)

161.3 lock up the student in a soundproof cell and... lecture room.

Nabokov was an ardent, though perhaps not entirely serious, proponent of this idea. He once remarked in an interview, "vainly I tried to replace my appearance at the lectern by taped records to be played over the college radio" (*SO*, 104). In another exchange he said,

> I have long come to the conclusion that the best teaching is done by records which a student can run as many times as he wants, or has to, in his soundproof cell. (Ibid., 124)

A few professors in Nabokov's novels have tried to put forth the idea; Vadim Vadimych N. of *LATH* failed, but Van Veen (*Ada*) almost succeeded (he did attend the lecture room but *played* his recorded lectures, merely imitating live delivery).

161.5 Yes, that's it

The conversation runs along parallel tracks, Hagen "expounding" his theory and the Clementses quietly talking about the portrait; the two lines converge when Laurence takes over the dialogue.

161.7 continued Hagen. "However, I have been... so easily..."

The New Yorker: "said Hagen, and went on. 'I have been...' ", "so easily" (line 10) was "quite as lightly."

161.17 They will reject Timofey's wonderful personality...

Hagen knows for certain that Pnin has no future at Waindell.

"Wonderful" is a pet word which he uses much too frequently—see n. 167.12.

161.21 One could have Timofey televised

Clements (who teaches the Philosophy of Gesture) perhaps remembered the film of Pnin's Russian gestures he made a couple of years earlier (see 41.23). At any rate, his remark provokes one of Pnin's "carpalistics" (see note below).

The New Yorker: '"Why, Timofey is good enough to be televised'."

161.23 Pnin bowed deeply... spreading of both hands

The Gesture Theme was introduced in Chapter Two (41-42) and has surfaced many times since. This gesture was classified under the "razvesti rukami" group (41.28) and is very similar to the one described in great detail in *Ada*:

> One of Ada's gestures—used when she had to express in a muted flash all the facets of her predicament... consisted of rounding by means of both hands an invisible bowl from rim to base, accompanied by a sad bow. (190)

161.27 said Clements... is to rely

The New Yorker: "said Laurence"; "is to rely" (line 30) was "is to take it easy and rely...."

162.5 a stunning likeness by an Old Master

N— has already pointed out this likeness—see n. 154.19. The theme of subjective resemblance and of the agonizingly evasive *déjà vu*, rich and fertile in *Pnin* in general, really springs forth toward the end.

The portrait of the Canon van der Paele is part of a large painting by Van Eyck (see n. 154.10); however, practically all pre-1954 Anglo-American art books and albums I have consulted (with the single exception of Lambotte's old book—see n. 160.20) reproduce one and the same fragment: the kneeling Canon and St. George's hand pointing to the (unseen) Madonna with the Child. Apparently this is exactly what Laurence has found in Victor's book.

162.7 here it is, here it is

The New Yorker: "here it is."

162.10 I must really protest

This *non sequitur* refers, of course, to the first part of Clements's soliloquy (the teaching methods); not only does it parallel nicely Joan's nonserial interpolation (161.5), but it also parodies Laurence's own reaction to Pnin's etymological enlargement on the subject of Cinderella's slippers, "The contents are fine," replying to Pnin's *primo* but perhaps implying his *secundo* (158.22).

162.18 Joan scrambled...

The New Yorker: "At this point, Joan scrambled...." The end of the sentence ("...and covered... to replenish it.") did not appear; instead, there was "and Mrs. Thayer...."

162.20 Mrs. Thayer looked at her wrist watch... husband

This banal and eloquent gesture ("time to go") is mentally recorded, iambified, and stored away by her husband (see n. 163.16).

The next two sentences are transposed in the *New Yorker*; furthermore, "if he knew" (line 22) was "whether he knew," and "in bats" (line 23) was "on bats."

162.22 Betty asked Thomas ... a man called Fogelman

Ornithology and Anthropology have another amusing reunion here (the first one occured when Thomas asked Pnin about the Pskov skylark-shaped pastry). "Vogel" is German for bird.

162.24 Hagen asked... beer...Eric Wind... physically

The prismatic theme of likeness has reached its crest. Pnin recalls Eric Wind when Hagen asks him for a glass of beer. Eric Wind had invited Pnin for "a couple of beers" to the ship's bar and revealed the nauseatingly cruel truth (see n. 48.30). The blow would be softened, he thought, if he paid "at least for the beer." Hagen, too, is about to tell Pnin the ruthless truth of his impending termination at Waindell. Later, Hagen drinks with Pnin the "last cup of wine" before proceeding with his farcical news-breaking routine, meaning to "sweeten the pill" (171). Naturally, Pnin fails to grasp the essence of that seemingly irrelevant semblance, but the reader, mindful of the "fantastic recurrence of certain situations" in the book, will not.

Cf. another facet of Hagen's duplication in the novel (as a gas-station attendant), mentioned in Chapter Five, 114.15 (see note).

The New Yorker: The passage is omitted; the last sentence of the

section was "The party was drawing to a close."

162.27 The setting of the final scene...

This undisguised stage direction underlines the dramatic techniques employed in the second part of the chapter.

162.29 a trunk in the closet

The New Yorker: "the umbrella stand."

163.4 like two well-fed caryatides

Nabokov apparently wanted "atlantes" here, for caryatids are *female* figures supporting an entablature. He had made the same mistake in *Sogliadatai* (*kariatidy*, p.28), but corrected it thirty-five years later in the English version of the novella: "The two are facing each other from opposite sides of the doorway, like two atlantes" (*The Eye*, 42).

The New Yorker: "caryatids."

163.14 write down later

The New Yorker: "write down in his diary later...."

163.16 We sat and drank... consorts met...

Among numerous trapfalls Nabokov's reader is invited to step onto, there are bits of metrical poetry scattered throughout his books and carefully camouflaged as plain narrative. It is especially difficult to spot such hidden little poems when their enjambmental joints are straightened out so that they may assume the natural prosaic inflexion, blending chameleonically with their environment, tucking their rhymes away in the least conspicuous crevices of the text, aligning themselves along the shadows on the dappled terrain of prose. Several obvious examples can be found in *G*, where this device closes the novel. In *Pnin*, the modest poetic harvest gathered by reticent Roy Thayer at the end of the party can be easily rearranged in verse:

> We sat and drank, each with a separate past
> locked up in him, and fate's alarm clocks set
> at unrelated futures—when, at last,
> a wrist was cocked, and eyes of consorts met...

This is the way the quatrain was printed in *The New Yorker*.

For more on this device see n. 182.31, and my article "Pushkin

Embedded," in *The VNRN* No. 8 (1982, Spring, pp.28-31).

The alarm-clock theme, one of the local representatives of the great theme of Fate, has rung several times in the course of the novel—see nn. 14.2, 35.23, 82.19.

In *PF*, when John Shade sets his alarm clock for the last time in his life, he is "reasonably sure" that it would wake him up next morning as usual, but there will be no next morning for him in the book:

> ...I am reasonably sure that I
> Shall wake at six tomorrow, on July
> The twenty-second, nineteen fifty-nine,
> And that the day will probably be fine;
> So this alarm clock let me set myself...
> (ll. 979-983)

The unfolding or recreating of Pnin's past, "locked up in him" and unknown to the rest of the company, is the primary task of the Narrator. And only N— knows Pnin's future in the novel (Pnin is to learn the sad part of it presently).

The last line of Thayer's poem versifies rather pompously his wife's vulgar gesture recorded by N— (see 162.20).

In general, the poem marvelously recaptures the entire stage show of the party. Incidentally, something in its wording, along with the setting and the frankly thespian techniques Nabokov uses to present the whole affair, suggests that he might have followed Wilson's advice to describe the *New Yorker*'s twenty-fifth anniversary party they both had attended. Here is what he wrote to Nabokov shortly thereafter (14 April, 1950):

> That evening had so many disagreeable incidents and *funestes* consequences that I have suggested it ought to be written about in the same way as John Hersey's *Hiroshima*. You would describe each small human unit pursuing his individual interests, passing from table to table [cf. "Thayer blundered from chair to chair...," 163.11]... hardly noting a discomfiture, a boredom, an irritation or an incipient drunkenness that seemed only incidental and unaware of the magnitude of the disaster that was annihilating them all. (*N-W*, 233; see also 234fn.)

The disastrous, for Pnin, conclusion of the evening comes in section 12.

163.22 The idea enchanted them. He led the way.

The New Yorker: "They were enchanted by the idea, and he led the way upstairs." In the next line, "*kabinet*" was "*kabinet*, or study...."

163.24 more or less Pakistan rug... acquired for his office

This "once Turkish rug" had been purchased by Pnin from Mrs. McCrystal (see 69.21).

The New Yorker: "more or less Turkish rug"; "his office" was "his office in Humanities Hall...."

163.29 cushions disguised

The New Yorker: "cushions had disguised."

163.32 Tom the Bootblack ... photographs

Horatio Alger, Jr. (1834-1899), American writer of more than 100 tales for boy's self-improvement of the naive rags-to-riches sort. The book mentioned in the novel is probably the New York (A. L. Burt) edition. In some other editions the title varied (*A Western Boy's Success*).

Ernest (Evan) Thompson Seton (original name, Ernest Seton Thompson, 1860-1946), English born American animal-story writer and naturalist. The full title of the book is *Rolf in the Woods: The Adventure of a Boy Scout with Indian Quonab and Little Dog Shockum*. The edition is probably that of Doubleday, Page & Co. (Garden City, N.Y., 1911).

Compare these books to those Pnin banished from Isabel's room (35.27).

The New Yorker: omitted.

164.4 three hundred sixty-five

The number of books borrowed by Pnin from the College Library has almost quintupled since 1951 (see 35.24) and now equals, curiously, the number of days in a non-leap year. Note that it is N—, not Pnin, who has counted them.

In the list of misprints, real or imagined, that Wilson spotted and sent to Nabokov, he calls "three hundred sixty-five... vulgar—there should be an *and*" (*N-W*, 310). There was an "and" in the *New Yorker* version.

164.8 rolling her eyes in mock dismay

This genteel grimace "of feminine resignation (eyes rolling up, mouth drooping sideways)" is shared by Charlotte (*L*, 78).

164.9 Mrs. Miller

The wife of the German Department's Associate Professor (see n. 147.29).

164.12 folding screen

There was a "four-section screen" in Pnin's St. Petersburg nursery (with a squirrel pyrographed on its lacquered wood—23.4).

164.14 dark rock wall rising abruptly

See n. 145.5. This looming cliff somehow reminds one of the avalanche simile in Chapter One (25.29), with its "Doom should not jam" maxim.

164.16 the reflection

The New Yorker: "a reflection."

164.22 under the curtain of mysteree

Pnin translates literally the Russian *pod zavesoi* [or *pokrovom*] *tainy*.

164.25 Roy handed

The New Yorker: "Roy Thayer handed..."; in the next line, "Herman" was "Herman Hagen," and "Laurence" (line 27) was "Laurence Clements." The sentence "Margaret's bag was sought" was omitted.

164.28 good-by, Professor Vin!

At last, Pnin betrays his mistake, too late to be straightened out. Professor Thomas vents his bewilderment as he walks to his car with the Clementses (see 165.9).

164.30 (Still in the hallway ... in Waindell)

The lengthy passage in parentheses (absent in the *New Yorker*) is an interesting example of what may be termed an "indirect one-sided dialogue," technically similar to rendering a telephone conversation (see 31.1).

165.1 cane had belonged to... Bavarian grandfather

Cf. "a German air picture of the stick" (42.3). This "grandfather" is the author of the dull-witted cranky apothegm with wich Hagen later regales Pnin (see n. 167.15).

165.14 answered Clements
In the *New Yorker* it followed "all his own." "Mythopeic" was spelled "mythopoeic" in the magazine.

165.17 He calls my wife John
See 59.24 and 60.6.

165.28 to give you a lift?
The New Yorker: "to give you a lift, Herman?"; in the next line, "It's a ten-minute walk" was ' "It's only a ten-minute walk', he said."

165.30 wonderful night
For Hagen's favorite epithet see nn. 161.17 and 167.12.

165.33 And all these are worlds ... inside it
Hagen's turgid "philosophical" pronouncement plumbs the lowest regions of fatuity and provokes Laurence prosaic but astute response. His casual paradox actually brings him as close to solving the ultimate truth of his universe as any of Pnin's attempts of that kind, for they all are indeed locked up inside the fluorescent corpus of the novel. Pnin's "rich laughter" reaches them from a distance at that very moment, and although it was caused by something totally unrelated to Laurence's cryptic quip, the synchronization is remarkable and may be meaningful.
The New Yorker: Laurence's reply ("Or else...inside it") was not included; in line 7, "my fluorescent corpse" was "Laurence."

166.12 said Joan
In the *New Yorker* it came at the end of the period ("'...dream house', said Joan").

166.19 Glad you could come
The New Yorker: "So glad you could come."

166.25 ("I would never... old Lesbian... earshot")
Joan refers to a "very gracious old lady, Dorianna Karen" (see n. 159.1). Laurence's "careful" has a twin in Chapter Two: see 37.29.

The New Yorker: This entire passage is absent.

166.30 said Betty to her merry host... dishes

The abrupt switch from gaiety to anguish is a persistent compositional design encountered in every chapter save the last one.

The New Yorker: "'...the dishes,' said Betty to her merry host..."

167.6 a last cup of wine

In view of Hagen's subsequent remark (167.14), this "last cup" acquires something reminiscent of "the-night-He-was-betrayed" overtone.

167.12 You are a wonderful host

As I have noted before (see 82.25, 161.17), the adjective "wonderful" frequently escorts Hagen's nouns. This Germanism is stressed in "Conversation Piece, 1945":

> The persistently recurring epithet "wonderful," the first syllable of which sounded like "wan," proclaimed his Teutonic origin. (*ND*, 128-129)

This Teutonic feature stems, of course, from the German "wunderbar." In Chapter Fourteen of *SM* there is a German student whose grotesque hobby was collecting capital punishment paraphernalia (snapshots, mostly), and whom the memoirist imagines showing to his "co-veterans the absolutely *wunderbar* pictures he took during Hitler's reign" (279).

Nabokov once wrote to Wilson (regarding Wilson's *Memoirs of Hecate County*), "...by the way, you often use the word 'wonderful' as you do in real life." (*N-W*, 165)

Hagen may be a wonderful person (and he certainly does care for Pnin) but, as a German character in Nabokov's story, he can hardly shed his predictably thick epidermis, his grotesquely blunt manner, his air of empty reassurance.

167.15 glass of good wine ... the last one before execution

This bombastic adage recalls the incipient and slapstick Monsieur Pierre of *IB* who does his horrible and farcical best to secure Cincinnatus's cooperation in the forthcoming demonstration of his axmanship.

Hagen's Bavarian grandfather is the original owner of the cane—see 165.1.

167.26 Hagen, why are you silent?

The New Yorker: "Why, Hagen, are you silent?."

167.31 not next year... at hundreth anniversary... of Serfs

That is, in eight years, by 1962 at the earliest, for Pnin probably uses the Russian term in jest (Russia abolished serfdom, her version of man-slavery, shortly before America, in February of 1861.) Actually, Pnin, that "galley slave" of the Author (see *SO*, 95), will indeed be liberated "next year" (1955). And it is precisely on the "hundredth anniversary of Liberation of Serfs" that he reappears in Nabokov's next novel, as full professor and chairman of the Russian Department.

Nabokov did not have a tenured position at Wellesley and it bothered him. In 1946, he writes to Wilson: "There does not seem to be any prospect of a permanent appointment in Wellesley and I am sick of being a badly underpaid instructor" (*N-W*, 164). And in another letter he admits that he is considering quitting the job altogether but adds: "Of course, giving up Wellesley would mean giving up all chances of an 'associate professorship', etc." (ibid, 173).

The New Yorker: "that Waindell," instead of "Waindell."

168.7 continued Hagen

The New Yorker: this remark concluded the sentence.

168.11 My modest all ... for America.

The New Yorker: these two sentences do not appear.

168.16 this dragon

The New Yorker: "this poltergeist."

168.23 On the Boot. On Nicholas the First.

The Boot, Boots, or Bootikin, a torture instrument applied to the leg and tightened, originated in Scotland before the 16th century. A similar implement called Spanish boots was used in Germany.

Nicholas I (1796-1855), Emperor of Russia from 1825 to 1855, ruthlessly crushed the Decembrist mutiny (1825), and this cast an ominous shadow on his stern reign.

168.25 Armenian massacres

In 1895 and again 1896, the Turks massacred a large number of the Armenians in the provinces and the capital of Armenia. But an even greater disaster came in 1915 when the Turks, regarding the Armenians as a treacherous foreign element in the ongoing war, deported two-thirds of

the population to the Middle East, brutally murdering about 600,000 of them en route. "Who remembers what became of the Armenians?" queries Hitler in *My Struggle*.

168.27 The history of man is the history of pain!

The "pain and panic" motif recurs. Compare Pnin's similarly aphoristic lament in his letter to Chateau: "Is sorrow not, one asks, the only thing in the world people really possess?" (52.7).

168.28 Hagen bent... patted him on his knobby knee

Yet another flashback to the germane Hagen—Wind likeness (162.24). Eric Wind makes a similar gesture under similarly critical and grotesque circumstances: "Wind put five long sensitive fingers on his sleeve." (49.12).

The New Yorker: absent.

169.1 scenes from Kotzebue to Hauptmann

For Kotzebue see n. 135.28. See also n. 170.32.

Gerhart Hauptmann (1862-1946), German playwright.

169.4 like Bodo ... replace him

The New Yorker: "like Bodo von Falternfels"; "offered to me" (line 5) was "offered me," and "replace him" (line 6) was "replace him there."

169.9 and prominent ... invaluable

The New Yorker: "and very prominent"; "invaluable" in the next line was "rich."

169.11 since I know ... German Department

The New Yorker: absent. In the next line, the text's "they tell me they have ... at Seaboard" was "they tell me at Seaboard that they have...."

169.15 So I spoke to Blorenge... full up.

The New Yorker had instead, "It is hardly necessary to tell you that Bodo won't continue you in the German Department."

169.17 Waindell feels

Hagen automatically repeats Blorenge's provincially tentative usage of the verb—see n. 141.21.

169.18 burden to pay you

The New Yorker: "burden to establish a special Russian Department and pay you. . . ."

In fact, the "Anglo-Russian writer" who is coming to teach at Waindell next semester intends to set up a Russian division there (see 186.17).

169.21 On the other hand . . . old friend of yours.

The circle of the chapter's thematic movement is almost complete now that the possibility of N—'s taking the job, mentioned at the beginning of the chapter (140.7), is becoming a fact. Conversely, Pnin, for whom the new semester "began particularly well" (143.9), is suddenly made to understand that it will be his last one at Waindell.

The New Yorker: absent.

169.28 I'm sure your old friend . . . these matters

A "crowning insult" never fails to come at chapter's end in *Pnin*. It now transpires that Pnin's only chance to retain his position entails working under the "fascinating lecturer," a situation impossible for him for reasons partly explained in Chapter Seven. But see *IN-IV*: 3 et seq.

The New Yorker: this whole passage does not appear.

169.32 Leaning forward, his elbows propped. . . unclasping hands. . .

The very same gesture is described in Nabokov's short story "Lance":

> . . . leaning forward from the edge of a low armchair, his shoulders hunched up, his elbows propped on his big knees—he has a way of slowly clasping and unclasping his handsome hands, a gesture I borrow for him from one of his ancestors. . . (*ND*, 201)

For Lance Boke (and one of his ancestors) see n. 101.9.

170.1 thirty years or more . . . We are friends, but

According to N—, they had first met in 1911 (see 174.11), but Pnin denies that.

It is curious that Pnin should admit that he and N— are friends. If this be so, despite the history of their previous encounters related by N— in the last chapter, then why should Pnin go to such lengths in an attempt to evade "his friend" when the latter arrives at Waindell? Is this N—'s insinuation? Or are there other reasons, indwelling but seen only from outside the novel's sphere, for the curious fact that the subject and the object of the narration cannot share the only space within it which might bring them to suffer a contact? For one possible answer see *IN-IV*.

170.6 We shall just go on... nicht wahr?
German, "Shan't we?"

170.9 So they have fired me
In Cockerell's burlesque version of this scene* Pnin says "shot" instead of "fired"—see 188.5.

170.11 in the same boat, in the same boat

This preposterous utterance once again, and with new vividness, connects this episode with the scene aboard the transatlantic boat in Chapter Two. The kinship between Hagen and Wind, the point of which Pnin fails to grasp (see n. 162.24) is thus confirmed. Clearly, Hagen's and Pnin's respective situations are diametrically opposite, Pnin having lost his modest job and Hagen having accepted a lucrative one.

The New Yorker: "in the same boat" (no encore).

170.18 Naturally, you will get ... if you will participate
Instead, Pnin will leave Waindell as soon as "his old friend" arrives.

The New Yorker: "by the way I hope you will participate...."

170.23 Dramatic Program in New Hall... daughter's direction
Pnin had participated in another stage show in the summer of 1916—see Section Two of Chapter Seven. In all probability Hagen's daughter is going to produce Kotzebue's *Das Kind der Liebe* (see n. 135.28); but see n. 170.32.

*Could Hagen, who has a weakness for flat jokes (see p. 160), have retold this one to Cockerell?

The New Yorker: "dramatic program in New Hall this Spring." Line 25, "under my daughter's direction," was absent.

170.29 flourished his cane

The gesture reminds of the "German air picture of the stick—'something is coming to you!' " (42.3).

170.30 and merrily marched

The New Yorker: "and marched...."

170.32 Der arme Kerl ... sweetened the pill.

"The poor fellow," in German. The caricature and sarcasm reach their utmost here but then break off abruptly, to be replaced by the cathartic issue and the subsequent mood of relief and high serenity of Section Thirteen.

Among Kotzebue's 200 or so plays there is one entitled *Der arme Poet* (1811), another *Der arme Dichter* (1815), and yet another, *Der arme Minnesänger* (1819?). I do not know whether they are completely independent creations, or form a trilogy, or are successive revisions of the same plot (however, they appeared in the same forty-volume collection of Kotzebue's plays during his lifetime). Could Hagen's trivial but emphatically German mutterance be N—'s way secretly to refer to the play in which Pnin, the "wonderful romantic," was offered a part by the kind-hearted but thick-rinded Hagen? Scarcely, but the coincidence is queer. See nn. 135.28 and 169.1.

171.12 A last drop ... beautiful bowl.

The seemingly inexorable loss of Victor's precious bowl would indeed be the last drop in the already brimming cup of Pnin's misfortunes—see n. 172.33.

171.13 Joan had crooked... Hagen had quenched...

Professor Thomas is the only guest whose presence at the party cannot be verified by the traces he has left at the table.

The New Yorker: "her plate, next" (line 17) was "her plate; it lay next..."; "twisted" (line 18) was "crumpled."

171.26 mangy little dog ... canine's pleasure

Pnin takes this dog with him out of this book (190.1) and into *PF* (p. 282). In Nabokov's world, man's compassion toward animals always suggests inbred probity. He recalls that his mother

> would often accuse herself (unjustly as I see it now) of having been less affected by the misery of man than by the emotional load man dumps upon innocent nature—old trees, old horses, old dogs. (*SM*, 47-48)

And in *BS* Krug remembers "the torrents of tears [his late wife] shed that night, while dripping with blood herself, over the crippled crying doe that had rushed into the blinding lights of the car." (28)

172.1 aquamarine bowl ... settled down to soak

The first-time reader ought to suspect that the bowl may never emerge again intact. "The overdose of meaning is our own" (*Carroll*, p.214).

172.9 might have taken... in a less methodical man

Should this passage imply that, for once, Pnin is *not* experiencing his "diffusion trance" at a crucial point in the chapter's dénouement?

The New Yorker: "in a less methodical man" is inserted between "might have been taken" and "for a mist of abstraction."

172.21 excruciating crack of broken glass

The alliteration adds to the heart-rending. "The pain of this moment, this apparent cruelty, is unbearable" (*Carroll*, p.206).

172.25 A quiet, lacy-winged little green insect

Must be one of the *trichoptera*, Rus. *obydenka* or *obydennik*. It appears precisely at the moment when Pnin has reached the pinnacle of his despair, in the same way the mosquitoes started getting suspiciously bothersome at the previous apex of Pnin's utter distress at the sunset of Chapter Five.

Vladimir Dal' Dictionary (vol.2, p.1634) calls these insects "ephemera living for no longer than a day, or several days; [they] appear suddenly... and just as suddenly vanish."

172.27 he looked very old... toothless... film of tears

Compare the crisis in Chapter Three: "In fear and helplessness, toothless, nightshirted Pnin heard..." (83.3).

172.33 a broken goblet... beautiful bowl was intact

It may well be the very goblet Hagen was nursing (167.22), the "last cup" which, in the words of Hagen's solemn granddad, "should be always sipped and savored as if it were the last one before execution." And the bowl, that "emblem of the [Pnin—Victor] bond" (*Carroll*, p.206), remains unbroken, contrary to Pnin's and reader's "anguished anticipation." "Nabokov," continues Carroll, "lurking as close to the surface as that suspicious green moth [a moth it is not—G.B.], pulls back from this worst of cruelties, though one which seems inevitable to the reader." (*idem*).

Many have observed that Nabokov discovered, described, and put to use the method of thwarting the reader's expectations very early.* In *LD* the countervailing mechanism is demonstrated several times, most obviously in the masked Uncle parable:

> Thus goes the Hegelian syllogism of humor. Thesis: Uncle made himself up as a burglar (a laugh for the children); antithesis: it *was* a burglar (a laugh for the reader); synthesis: it still was Uncle (fooling the reader)... (143)

The author always reserves the last laugh for himself.

The New Yorker: "Victor's beautiful bowl was intact.."

173.1 He took a fresh ... on the safest shelf...

In the final version it is Joan who mentions the "recurrent design" (see n. 159.23); obviously, statements of such importance ought not to be repeated. This brings back the "recurrence of the pattern" on the wallpaper in Pnin's nursery (23.21) and the theme of a concealed key to it running through the novel.

The New Yorker: "Pnin rubbed it dry with a fresh towel working the cloth very tenderly over the recurrent design of the docile glass. Then, with both hands, in a statuesque gesture, he raised the bowl and placed it on a high, safe shelf."

173.4 of a cupboard... securely locked up... you said—

Through the miraculous recovery of the bowl Pnin suddenly regains

* Among recent works, see Larry R. Andrews's "Deciphering Signs and Symbols," in *NICOL-RIVERS*; see especially pp.150-1.

the feeling that he is in the caring hands of an unknown benefactor, one who creates and monitors the pattern of his life, with its recurrences and hallucinations, one who has made the "evil designer" part of the design. In its final form, this thought is fit into the long compound period which Nabokov accelerates by resorting (as he often does at critical junctures) to the familiar "and-and-and" shorthand ("and the bowl stood aloof and serene... and the little bright house was securely locked up in the large dark night..."). However, in the magazine version, with practically all references to N— carefully erased and with no Chapter Seven, the final passage belabors this encompassing idea with the frankness Nabokov seldom allows:

> The sense of security there [on the "safest shelf" where Pnin put the bowl] communicated itself to his own state of mind, and he felt that "losing one's job" dwindled to a meaningless echo in the rich, round inner world where none could really hurt him.

I discuss certain theoretical aspects of this closing in *IN-IV*: 5, while its most curious history is outlined, insofar as it was possible without seeing the entire correspondence on the matter between Nabokov and Mrs. White of the *New Yorker*, in *IN-I*.

Pnin's outer world seems as round as his inner one, or as Pushkin's "harmonical wholeness" (99.18)—in short, as round as "all good worlds" ought to be (see "An Evening of Russian Poetry," line 22).

The circle of the chapter is now structurally perfect, the tension, eased, and Pnin (now drafting a letter to Hagen) disappears from the reader's sight. He will make his quick final appearance again on the last page of the book, speeding out of it.

The recapitulation of developed subjects, which ends in a coda, is a usual compositional element of a sonata form.

173.11 recaputilate (crossed out) recapitulate

Laurence Clements, the only scholar on campus congenial to Pnin, has said that "his slips of the tongue are oracular" (165.16). "Caput" is a principle in the Roman law that embraces the status of a free man, the Roman Citizen. Pnin will be free as soon as he leaves Waindell and the novel, i.e. when his existence in it is terminated.

Chapter Seven

The seventh and final chapter consists of exactly seven sections, a reduced replica of the larger structure of the novel as a whole. According to Brian Boyd, the chapter had a title in manuscript, "I Knew Pnin" (see *IN-I*).

174.1 My first recollection... spring Sunday of 1911.

The last chapter differs essentially from the preceding ones which make up the "synoptic" part of the novel. The narrator drops his disguises and assumes the leading part of a memoirist recreating in brief, successive episodes Pnin's past up to the moment when the author and his subject nearly collide at a point in the present; but N— never catches up with his hero, and they part forever.

"There is a shift in narrative perspective in the final chapter... The intrusive narrator finally moves to the center of the stage..." (*Connolly*, p.207).

Not only was 23 April, 1911 (the 10th in the Old Style and Nabokov's birthday—see 174.12) a Sunday but it was Easter Sunday in Russia, where the Gregorian calendar had not yet been adopted. Easter in April is mentioned also in Chapter Two (p.46; the year is 1938, when Easter was April 17), and Four, where Victor visits Pnin in April on Easter vacation. (And N— meets Pnin in Paris on an unspecified "April night"—179.20).

174.6 Ladoga ice...Neva...indigo waves...barges...creak

Nabokov reproduced this very water-color sketch of early springtime in St. Petersburg, with light retouching, several times. In the short story "Mademoiselle O" (originally written in French, 1939, and later included in *Conclusive Evidence*), there is a picture of "those exciting St. Petersburg mornings when the fierce and tender, damp and dazzling arctic spring bundled away broken ice down the sea-bright Neva." (*ND*, 190). In a letter to Wilson, recollecting his Tenishev School days, Nabokov mentions the *upoitel'naia sineva nevskoi vesny* [the delightful lividness of springtime on the Neva] (*NW*, 103). And in his commentaries to Pushkin's poem, Nabokov sets the period of the ice break-up on the Neva "between mid March and end of April N.S." (*EO*, iii, 233), which makes April 10, Old Style, a perfectly plausible Sunday for Chapter Seven's opening section.

174.12 new English bicycle ... my twelfth birthday

Bicycling makes several entries in *SM*'s subject catalogue.

Not only was N— born the same year, perhaps even on the same day (see n. 174.1), as Nabokov, but he grew up in the same house in "St. Petersburg"—see following note.

175.1 our rosy-stone house in the Morskaya

The Nabokov's mansion in St. Petersburg was No.47 in Morskoy (now Herzen) Street, a few blocks from the river. A modern photograph of this "*pink granite*" house is published in *SM* (facing p.64).

175.2 parquet-smooth wooden pavements

Cf. *EO*:

> Some streets in St. Petersburg were cobbled, others macadamized. Pavements consisting of hexagonal blocks of pinewood fitted like joiner's work were introduced about 1830. (ii, 166)

175.15 the space of time

Nabokov seemed to like this conventional little paradox, for he toys with it in many works, and dissects it in the seminal Part Four of *Ada*. See also a letter to Wilson: "I shall have some timespace for certain pleasurable labors..." (269).

This slightly absurd combination is reasonably old; see, for example, Coleridge's "Phantom of Fact" (1834), where the two components are nicely severed (and thus pointed up) by an especially abrupt enjambment:

> This riddling talk, to what does it belong?
> Is't history? vision? or an idle song?
> Or rather say at once, within what space
> Of time this wild disastrous change took place?

175.18 window...reflected...glass dome...clock...on the mantelpiece

The Reflection Theme sprang forth in Chapter One (windowpane—brass knob, p.24). A virtually identical description of this sort of clock obtains in *RLSK*: "...a dead burnished clock... under its glass dome on an evil mantelpiece..." (9).

The ensuing funny little episode in *Pnin* (an overheard conversation between lovers in a doctor's waiting room) is quite peripheral to this novel—but it is a crux in the plot development in *Kamera Obskura* (see pp.149-151). The scene (implanted by Udo Konrad, a writer and a friend of Krechmar's, in his budding novel) contains a bloated description of an interior almost indistinguishable from that in *Pnin*. Cf. the following

Proustian period:

> In the waiting room, where Herman sat down by a wicker coffee table on which the dead, white-bellied magazines drooped their cold fins, and where the lop-sided rectangle of the window, behind which the sultry sun shone, and the Mediterranean shimmered, and feet shuffled along the gravel paths, was reflected in the glass dome of a golden clock on the mantelpiece—six people were already waiting. (140)

Two of those six happened to be Magda (Margot of *LD*) and Horn (Rex), and it was their passionate twitter (in German) that Konrad overheard and stored away for his book, the manuscript of which he reads to Krechmar, thus inadvertently exposing the whole sordid scheme. The English version of the novel employs a similar but somewhat mitigated arrangement, devoid of the rich parodistic effects of the original; see *LD*, Chapter 29.

176.5 the late Dr. Chekhov

Chekhov (who was a practising doctor) died in 1904. Mentioning him by his medical title enhances the feeling of this being an essentially different world, astonishingly like ours, yet slightly off axis and definitely autonomous, the world where "Chekhov" is a doctor, "Tolstoy," Pnin's father's patient (and Baron Dementiy "Demon" Veen's pal), and "Vladimir Vladimirovich N.," a fictional Anglo-Russian writer. See n. 21.31.

It is, perhaps, more than merely curious (and certainly not "coincidental") that Dr. Pnin should have the name and patronymic (Pavel Antonovich) which mirror those of "Dr. Chekhov"—see n. 132.16.

176.10 I wonder where that speck ... exist somewhere

This "dull, mad fact" haunts at least two other Nabokov's characters. In *RLSK*, William, the Shakespearean hero of Knight's novel *The Prismatic Bezel*, says,

> I sometimes wonder... where the things we shed are—because they must go *somewhere*, you know,—lost hair, fingernails... (99)

And Perov, the forgotten poet, wrote in one of his youthful poems:

> If metal is immortal, then somewhere
> there lies the burnished button that I lost
> upon my seventh birthday in a garden.
> Find me that button and my soul will know
> that every soul is saved and stored and treasured...
> (*ND*, 47)

176.14 other middle-class apartments

N— seems to point up the difference between the settings from which he and Pnin respectively come. He lives in a "rosy-stone" house—Pnin, in a middle-class apartment ("with a steady smell of hashed-cabbage pie," 177.5). Unlike Pnin, who attended a public *gimnaziia*, he went to a fashionable private school (see n. 176.30). N—'s grandaunt owned a large estate on the fringes of which she apparently let a summer *dachka* to the Pnins (see n. 133.5). And he does not fail to remark in passing that his toys were better than Pnin's (177.9). Critics have found this a deliberately emphasized superiority of the arrogant narrator over the meek hero. To wit, Julian Connolly says that "the Narrator sets forth several recollections about Pnin's childhood ... but they are fraught with prejudice and conjecture." (*Connolly*, p.208).

But there are other possibilities—see *IN-IV*: 3-5.

One also ought to be able to discern here a parody of the literary modus well-known since Byron which aims at preventing light-headed confusion of the first person narrator with his protagonist. In a famous parody of the dedication to Canto Four of *Childe Harold*, Pushkin says,

> Vsegda ia rad zametit' raznost'
> Mezhdu Oneginym i mnoi
>
> [I'm always glad to note the difference
> Between Onegin and myself]
> (*Evgenii Onegin*, I,lvi, 3-4)

The absurd and amusing point of the situation in *Pnin* is that its plot cancels any possibility for such traditional assumptions and no less commonplace brush-offs.

176.30 I attended a more liberal school

Probably, the Tenishev School, founded in 1900 by Prince Viacheslav Tenishev (1844-1903), which Nabokov entered in January of that year (1911).

177.8 a stuffed squirrel

The last appearance of this creature in the novel can be compared to the first one, on the screen beside Pnin's bed. Moreover, either the stuffed squirrel of the final chapter or the pyrographed one of the first chapter is a projected image of the other, depending on whether N— relies on his memory ("stuffed") or imagination ("pyrographed"). It seems far-fetched to assume, as Julian Connolly does, that what "previously was a source of anxiety to Pnin (as a mysterious image on a screen near his sickbed), or an ungrateful and threatening creature (in chapters 2 and 3), now has been

transformed into an entirely harmless and innocuous object, a child's plaything" (*Connolly*, p. 208). Apart from the slightly disturbing fact that such a development would reverse the actual chronology of the scenes described, one may point out that in Chapter Four, right in the middle of the book, the squirrel appears as an even more innocuous post-card picture "in an educational series" (88.25). An overdose of symbolism effectively puts out this elegant emblem which is important and tell-tale more because of its expected recurrence in every chapter and the everchanging manner of this recurrence, than because of its allusive meaning that may or may not yield fertile speculation. Of course, that busybody of a rodent, which sprang from Timosha's screen at the novel's onset and skipped all over it, is now safely immobilized (yet another familiar cinematographic trick, by the way), but this should generate much less philological gossip than has the bird which gets stuffed in the last act of Dr. Chekhov's play. For the theme's summary see *IN-IV*: 2.

The proximity of a stuffed squirrel to a geographical map ("a map of Russia on the wall") seems to advert to some genuine original image stamped on Nabokov's memory, for it first occurs in *The Defense*: "An étagère supported a globe and a stuffed squirrel bought once on Palm Sunday at the Catkin Fair" (p.33). However, I do not intend to attach to this curious fact any special significance, even though in two instances (Chapters One and Five) the squirrel does appear after Pnin has failed to follow precise written itineraries (a "sketch map" in the latter case), as if to rescue him from the maze he has wandered into.

177.9 I had a similar one... twice bigger, bought in Biarritz.

This "twice bigger" is characteristic—see n. 176.14. See also *IN-V* for Nabokov's correction of this phrase ("twice as big").

As a child, Nabokov used to be taken to Biarritz almost every autumn; in Chapter Seven of *SM*, he describes the 1909 trip.

177.10 After one had wound up... predicted the end of the tether.

A simple allegoric parallel which crassly tempts the reader here should be gingerly brushed aside even if it lands on his lap of its own accord. Indeed, the "manner of twist" of the narration has perceptibly changed in this final chapter, having developed "fascinating thick whorls" of rapid recollections of N—'s previous encounters with Pnin. The end of the winding is near, the cord connecting them will snap soon, and the hooked hero will free himself from the ingenious puppeteer. But this kind of facile metatextual reading is too easy and too perilous even when it sounds true and promising.

177.14 Five years later... a dreary old aunt... the Baltic coast.

This is the same memorable summer of 1916 that Pnin (who had just graduated from the University) spent with the Belochkins at the same Baltic resort. He tries to recapture that summer in Chapter Five (see n. 132.16) but he certainly remembers it not the way N— relates it here. The old aunt (actually, great aunt) of N— is the widow of General N— (see n. 133.5).

177.20 rare aberration of the Paphia Fritillary

This insect belongs to the large genus of mostly European and Asiatic butterflies, *Argynnis*. *A. paphia* Linnaeus is a Silver-Washed Fritillary, on the wing from the end of June through August (so the episode must be set in July or August to agree with N—'s remark that he had spent "the beginning of the summer" on their estate near St. Petersburg). While I have nothing to say about that particular "exceptionally rare aberration," I can mention a color form, found only in females (*valesina*), which has a pale grey and green suffusion on the upperside of the wing.

177.29 permission to use an empty barn... a play

In this chapter, N— rather often uses recast but still recognizable bits from Nabokov's life. There is an episode relating to July of 1915 which Nabokov recalled for Field and which he did not include in Chapter Twelve of *SM*):

> In the early part of the first summer Nabokov has his first encounter with a member of the ["Tamara"] family when he rode to the *dacha* together with his tutor to extend permission—at the same time declining to participate himself—for a soccer match that her older brother... wished to arrange on one of the meadows belonging to the Nabokovs. (*Field-77*, pp.103-4)

Note that N— declines to take part in the play Pnin and Belochkin want to stage in the barn on his grandaunt's estate (see next note).

In his introduction to the English version of *Mary*, Nabokov names the barn concert episode among the three that "should have been transported virtually intact" into *SM* (see *Mary*, p.xii).

178.1 Russian translation ... Schnitzler's three-act "Liebelei"

The plot of Arthur Schnitzler's (1862-1931) early play *Liebelei* (1894; sometimes translated as *Flirtations*) is exceedingly vapid. Two young rakes and dragoons, Fritz and Theodore, flirt with two lower-class Viennese girls, Christine and Mizi, respectively. Theodore is reckless and plain, and Mizi, a quick conquest, readily accepts the simple rules of the dull game (officer dating a poor milliner etc.). Fritz, on the other hand, is a

"romantic" (in Hagen's deifnition—cf. 168.30), and he has had a previous (perhaps, ongoing) affair with a married woman whose infuriated husband ("Der Herr," played by Pnin, according to N—) challenges him to a duel in Act One. Curiously enough, Fritz's other second (the first one is, of course, Theodore) is called Lensky of all names (in Pushkin's novel this is the name of a "romantic" poet who dies in a rencontre with Onegin). "The Gentleman" eventually kills Fritz, and Christine, an earnest and affectionate girl who is seriously in love with him, is left with a heart broken beyond repair. The cast also includes Christine's father, a violinist (whom Pnin insists he actually did play), and Katharine Binder, a hosier's wife and a seedy virago. Although it is generally assumed that Schnitzler was more interested in psychological than social matters (being also keenly interested in psychoanalysis), the play is tedious proof to the contrary. His invention of that special kind of woman type, "süsses Mädel," the sweet wench, that haunts his early plays through *Countess Mizi* (1906), can be applied, with some stretching, padding, and reservations, to Liza's character as it is outlined in the novel. Of course, from this angle, Pnin's playing "Der Herr," the betrayed husband (incidentally, Eric Wind addresses Pnin *lieber Herr* three times in the book—see, for instance, 46.12), may cast a long, tinted shadow on the whole plot, but this kind of thing is so easy to overdo than one had better not do it at all, certainly not in a plain philological guide such as this.

Liebelei was translated into Russian as *Zabava* by Mme Teplov (separate edition, Moscow, 1908), and although I was unable to verify this *de visu*, I assume it was published in the Russian edition of Schnitzler's *Complete Collected Works* in 9 volumes (Moscow, 1906-1911).

Nabokov told Field of the following relevant episode which occurred in Yalta in 1918 or 1919:

> Nabokov himself acted ... in a production of *The Betrayal* by the playwright Arthur Schnitzler. Letters were thrown in Nabokov's face, he fought a duel, and was killed. (*Field-77*, 131)

If that play was *Liebelei* (as I believe it was), then Nabokov must have played Fritz (for the letters scene, see n. 178.22), that is, the Gentleman's wife's suitor. Would N— have agreed to play Fritz if he had been offered that part instead of the role of the cuckolded husband? That would have made of the entire episode a referential prologue to the ensuing events. But Nabokov carefully avoided such trivial combinations. On the other hand, the opening episode in *The Eye* (a fiercely jealous husband with a farcical name Kashmarin [Mr. Nitemer] first telephones Smurov to tell him that he is coming, and then thrashes the wretched lover with his cane) resembles very much the corresponding plot line in Act One of Schnitzler's play, even to the minute details of both "Husbands'" aspect:

> [Kashmarin came] in an olive raincoat with fashionable shoulder loops, his face pale as if paralyzed by a photographer's flash—with protruding eyes, dilated nostrils, and a lip replete with venom under the black equilateral triangle of his trimmed mustache. (*The Eye*, 22)

Cast as "the Herr," Pnin, N— recalls, had a "buff overcoat" and "bushy mustachios"—see n.178.29.

For another possible Schnitzlerian allusion see n. 44.22.

178.2 Ancharov, a provincial semiprofessional actor

Ancharov's double in the first chapter is Khodotov, called "the great ham actor" there (see nn. 27.20 and 179.10). They are symmetrical in reverse: one of Pnin's Baltic aunts "adored [Khodotov] from afar," whereas it is now Ancharov who "humor[s] a moneyed old maid," also at a Baltic resort (179.10). This and other aberrations with which the last chapter teems may be deliberately encrusted variances between N—'s personal memory and artistic fantasy which is but a form of creative memory. See *IN-IV*: 3-5.

178.6 at sixteen

A slip of the tongue or memory: in the summer of 1916 N— (who five years earlier had been twelve—see 175.1) was seventeen. He is one year younger than Pnin.

178.10 kvas

Kvas is a Russian beverage usually made of leavened rye with malt. *Grushevoi kvas*, however, is made from pears and is more like a very mild fruit-flavored liqueur or punch.

178.15 Robert Karlovich Horn

This is another latent clue to subtle thematic bonds collocating the final chapter with the rest of the novel. In this case the interjoining cord has its other end fastened in Chapter One, where a totally marginal Bob Horn, whose wife is about to give birth, is the young attendant at the Whitchurch railway station. See n. 25.25.

Such serial devarications in the last chapter naturally put to doubt the reliability of N— in his capacity of either memoirist (Chapter Seven) or "honest narrator" (chapters 1-6). The same provincial actor has different names in Chapter One and Seven (and is put in exactly opposite situations: see n. 178.2); now two totally unrelated persons, a young American clerk and a Rigan estate steward two generations older, share both the first name

and last.*

178.22 packet of love letters... flung them into Fritz's face

This slapstick gesture is the personal contribution of whoever was responsible for the play's staging, but it probably goes back to that Yalta performance Nabokov took part in (see n. 178.1) and thus reaches beyond *Pnin*'s boundaries. The original stage direction is less spectacular:

> Er wirft ein Paket, das er aus der Tasche des Überziehers nimmt, auf den Schreibtisch. [He hurled a parcel that he produced from his overcoat pocket onto the desk].
> (*Gesammelte Werke von Arthur Schnitzler*, Berlin, 1912, Part 2, vol. 1, p. 229)

178.29 buff overcoat, bushy mustachios...

"The Herr," who makes his stormy and brief appearance in Act 1, wears a "gelben Überzieher, trägt Handschuhe, hält den Hut in der Hand" (op.cit., 228).

179.10 moneyed old maid in real life whom Ancharov humored

In the initial version of Pnin's past, "one of his Baltic aunts... adored from afar" Khodotov, "the great ham actor" (see nn. 27.20 and 178.2). Can that aunt be the "old maid" of Chapter Seven? The remark "in real life" in this context sounds even more ambiguous than it ought to by its nature.

The "old maid in real life" was miscast as Christine even more than it may appear at first glance, for in Act Two there is much talk about Christine's *aunt*, a *spinster*, who had died not long before and who had been protected all her life by her brother (Christine's father) from the world's temptations and happiness.

179.21 in the early twenties

No earlier than 1925, probably, close to the year Pnin met Liza (see 44.16). Pnin lived in Prague until 1925—see 11.6.

179.24 It was the custom... The Three Fountains...

This custom has been recorded by many Russian émigré memoirists. Cf. Nina Berberov's *Kursiv Moi* (Russian second, revised, edition, New York, 1983. The passage is omitted in the 1969 English version, *The Italics Are Mine*):

*Although uncontrolled coincidences are a priori excluded from Nabokov's fiction, I think that the fact that Axel Rex's clone and predecessor in *Kamera Obscura* is named Otto Horn should be discarded as inconsequential in regard to *Pnin*'s Horns.

> In those years [the 1920s] it was a sacred ritual of sorts to gather in a café after a lecture or a public reading; we would usually spend a couple of hours at the table in Montparnasse, or in the vicinity of Porte de Saint-Cloud or Porte d'Auteil, not far from where most of us lived... (vol.1, p.372)

180.1 lucidity and strength of my memory. However...

N—'s memory proves to be, to quote him, "alas, too lucid" (24.1). The first person narrator of *Spring in Fialta* says that, were he a writer, he would allow only his heart "to have imagination, and for the rest rely upon memory, that long-drawn sunset shadow of one's personal truth" (*ND*, 24). But in fiction no one's memory can be trusted, and a "personal truth" may well be a pigment of the author's indelible imagination.

180.24 Ivan Nagoy

The English equivalent of that idiotic nom de plume would be John Nude.

180.25 which is performed by intertwining...

In Act One of *Liebelei*, Mizi and Fritz, and Theodore and Christine link arms and kiss "as is done when drinking to friendship" [wie man Bruderschaft zu trinken pflegt. Op.cit., 225].

180.32 rhymsterettes wrote after Akhmatova

This is a reiteration of what has been said on the subject in Chapter Two (45.19 et seq.). As in several other instances in this chapter N— seems to forget, or prefers to ignore, the text of the preceding six (which, technically, might not have existed yet, in accord with the internal chronology of the novel). Incidentally, the spelling of Anna Akhmatov's name here differs from that in Chapter Two (see p.45).

181.3 Samotsvetov... skazal... opustila glaza

Cf. Liza's poem written some three decades later (n. 56.4). The most obvious source of this pastiche is Anna Akhmatova's poem "Uglem nametil na levom boku" [He coal-marked the left-side spot], 1914, from her collection *Rosary*:

> Chtob tot, kto spokoen v svoem domu,
> Raskryvshi okno skazal:
> Golos znakomyi, a slov ne poimu,
> —I opustil glaza.

[So that he who finds peace in his own home
Might say through the open window:
The voice is familiar, but the words are obscure,
—And lowered his gaze.]

181.11 "u" is pronounced... "oo," "i".... "ee"....

This is exactly the way Pnin misarticulates *English* sounds (stoopid moozishan, 43.1; nootrition, 35.2; Reeverside, 62.12 etc.), so this little concurrent theme is picked up in passing, too.

181.13 Such incomplete rhymes ... very elegant.

Anna Akhmatova was a great champion of this sort of inexact rhyming.

In his *Notes on Prosody* Nabokov observes that "the quest for spectacular rhyme eventually led Russian poets to the incomplete or assonant rhyme" (*EO*, iii, 539).

181.15 erotic ... cour d'amour

For "erotic undercurrents" see ll.3-4 of Liza'a poem; for *cour d'amour* (court of Love) see line 6. See also n. 184.4.

181.22 another café... ablaze among a dozen young Russian poets

The setting is somehow reminiscent of Aleksandr Blok's celebrated poem "Neznakomka" [Incognita]: a restaurant, a girl "passing amid the drunks," her "blue bottomless eyes" aglow. Liza's inscription in her book of verse presented to N— makes the association even more convincing (see nn. 184.6 and 182.23).

181.30 a pair of twittering young Englishmen

This couple (Chris and Lew—see 182.18) has also undergone several transmutations in the course of the novel—see nn. 63.31 and 90.26. In this last disguise they save Liza's life.

181.32 Poor Liza!

This happens to be the title of Nikolai Karamzin's (1766-1826) once popular novella (1792), as Andrew Field correctly notes (*Field-67*, p.140). The allusion, following as it does the dry account of the beginning of N—'s brief affair with Liza, acquires a corollary meaning when compared to Nabokov's round-up of Karamzin's tale:

> Liza, a young country girl . . . is seduced near a moonlit pond by a frivolous nobleman graced with the comedy name of Erast, although the scene is laid in a suburb of Moscow. There is nothing much more to say. . . (*EO*, iii, 143-144)

See n.133.13 on the more proprietory appeal "my poor Pnin" which turns up several times in the novel and may indeed be the title of N—'s story about Pnin (see *IN-I* and *IV*).

182.1 she would stop . . . on a May night

This "May night" is chosen not at random. Their romance started in April and continued through May, and the scene described here is a first-hand account of impressions collected by N— during their trysts and strolls that spring in Paris.

It would be interesting, if a little forced, to drag in here Gogol's *May Night, or The Drowned Girl* (1831), a facetious but half-baked horror story steeped in garish quasi-folk regionalities. Liza is likened to a "mermaid" several times in *Pnin* (see especially Chapter Two).

182.4 light of a street lamp. . . translucent green of linden leaves

This image beckons once again the mysterious lines of Shade's poem on electricity:

> Streetlamps are numbered, and maybe
> Number nine hundred ninety-nine
> (So brightly beaming through a tree
> So green) is an old friend of mine.
> (*PF*, 192)

For more on Shade's poem's implications in regard to *Pnin* see nn. 14.2 and 151.7.

182.11 In the result of emotions. . . sleeping pills

This episode was mentioned perfunctorily in Chapter Two as a consequence of a "silly affair with a littérateur who is now—" (45.10).

Is this idiosyncratic "in the result" meant to be a reminder that N—, after all, is a Russian, too, and so his English armour is not impregnable? For this is a lexical calque of the Russian expression "v resul'tate" (followed by the genitive case).

182.23 strange. . . enchanting new hat with a blue bird's wing

Possibly, another oblique reference to Blok's "Neznakomka" (see n. 181.22). The "strange girl" of the poem wears a "hat with mournful

plumes," and these "ostrich plumes wave" in the poet's entranced brain.
"Svelte" is misspelled in both hardcover and paperback editions.

182.31 The letter ... my dear Lise

A considerably more elaborate verse-embedded-in-prose example than Roy Thayer's poem (see n. 163.16). Across the surface of the innocently looking prosaic lead to Pnin's letter and through its opening sentence ripples an iambic tetrameter with a definite Pushkinian lilt. Here is this passage in its regular strophic habits (the sentence immediately preceding, "She hailed a taxi and was gone," being a four-foot iambic line in its own right, gives the quatrain that follows a metric momentum):

> The letter has by chance remained
> among my papers. Here it is:
> "I am afraid you will be pained
> by my confession, my dear Lise."

This is a parody of the epistolary exchange between Tatiana and Onegin, and especially of the way Pushkin's avatar presents Lenski's farewell doggerel:

> Stikhi na sluchai sokhranilis';
> Ia ikh imeiu; vot oni—
> (Canto Six: xxi, ll.1-2)

Nabokov's literal translation of these two lines goes:

> The verses chanced to be preserved;
> I have them; here they are—

The paraphrastic version Nabokov uses in *Pnin* replaces the natural intonational breaks between the lines by the overflowing enjambment repeated in the second pair, thus camouflaging the rhythmic joints and enhancing the prosaic effect.

In *Ada*, Van comments on Ada's translation of François Coppée's poem, "only close relatives can be forgiven for paraphrasing illustrious poems. Let me preface the effort of a cousin ... by a snatch of Pushkin, for the sake of rhyme..." (246), and proceeds to adjust Pushkin's lines to the beginning of Coppée's piece:

> By chance preserved has been the poem.
> In fact, I have it. Here it is:
> *Leur chute est lente* and one can know 'em...
> (247)

which is technically very close to the trick performed in *Pnin*. This Pushkin allusion in *Ada* has been established by Vivian Darkbloom in her notes to

the Penguin paperback edition of *Ada* (Harmonsworth, 1970)*.

In his commentary to *EO*: III, xxi, 1 ("Tatiana's letter is before me"), Nabokov notes that "its presence in the hands of Pushkin, considered as a character in the novel, may be explained, for instance, by Onegin's transcribing it for him in Odessa..." (*EO*, ii, 383-384). In *Pnin*'s case, the explanation is much more straightforward: Liza simply left the letter in N—'s hands, and he has already mentioned it in Chapter Two: "Pnin wrote her a tremendous love letter—now safe in a private collection..." (45.7).

N— has preserved Pnin's letter only "by chance," and this echoes Nabokov's note to Pushkin's Canto Six (xxi, 1): "Pushkin did not preserve [Lenski's poem] as 'religiously' (*svyato*) as he did Tatiana's letter." (*EO*, iii, 24).

183.1 the writer, though using Russian... Innokentievna

This very prosaic aside deliberately and abruptly breaks off the iambic rhythm, thus circumscribing its poetic value. The tongue-in-cheek "I presume" is slightly misleading: it is N—, and not Pnin, who for the sake of rhyme has chosen this French form of Liza's name.

The letter, "originally" written in Russian, is an early illustration (with a sprinkle of parody) of Nabokov's theory of literal translation expounded and put to practice in his monumental *EO*. The wording is sometimes purposely clumsy; the idiom is often reproduced by the closest semantic equivalent, outlandish or not; some tricky terms are glossed in brackets (cf. Pnin's "brave literality" in dealing with Pushkin's poem in his Russian class, p.68). Tatiana's letter to Onegin was penned in French; Pushkin "translated" it into Russian, and Nabokov transfers the arrangement, with variations, to *Pnin*.

183.9 celebrated painter... Massachusetts... other things

It would be nice if this painter turned out to be Gramineev of Chapter Five. At any rate, it is clear that among "many other things" that "rumor proclaims," Liza's recent attempt at suicide because of the affair with N— must have had a prominent place. See n. 183.17.

183.15 But, Lise, I offer you everything I have

Pnin's letter is, in a sense, a reprint from the negative of Onegin's spurning reaction to Tatiana's love letter, which, as Nabokov suggests, Pushkin initially designed also in letter form. Here is the beginning of the prose draft of this rebuff:

*Through an oversight, I failed to mention this fact in my "Pushkin Embedded," referred to earlier. See that article for another Pushkin implant in *Ada*, also dressed as plain prose.

> Had I been thinking of marriage, had a peaceful family life attracted my fancy, then I would have elected you and none other... but I am not made for bliss... (*EO*, ii, 423)

One can easily imagine that N— treated Liza to a somewhat similar lecture, which in turn would set off a necessary contrast, with the tone and sense of Pnin's letter exactly reversed. Of course, Liza is not Tatiana, but then the situation in this chapter of *Pnin* is just a light and careful travesty of a certain literary habit found in Pushkin's novel, more technical than meaningful, and on the whole quite transient.

Incidentally, there is no evidence that N— is married when he arrives at Waindell in 1955, nor is there anything in the novel to suggest that he ever has been.

183.17 This is more than any genius... so much to store

This may be a direct hint at Liza's most recent infatuation with N—, the young gifted writer. If Pnin understands that a genius constantly absorbs, registers, and stores away impressions and observations that his future recreative tasks might require, then he should also understand N—'s method of retouching his past (his fierce objection to this method is another matter). The "personal truth," once recorded in a work of fiction, is no longer personal and much less true, as Pnin has had ample opportunity to learn in the course of the novel.

183.22 to write poems... to go on with your... research

Here again Pnin's attitude squarely contrasts that of N— who dismissed Liza's miserable poetry as utterly worthless and strongly advised her against any further attempts at versification, and who also treated her psychotherapeutic follies with much more derisive sarcasm than tolerant Pnin ever could muster.

183.25 Incidentally ... excellent paper

This unexpected and, for a love letter, rather odd footnote is a good example of Pninism and is comparable to Poroshin's pedantic aside ("there is, by the way, an excellent monograph by Chistovich on the subject, published in 1883," 119.1). Moreover, not only had their marriage started on a footnote, so to speak, it actually ended with a bibliographic farewell: when about to sail off to America, Pnin "sent Liza the last issue of an émigré magazine where she was mentioned on page 202" (46.26).

183.27 birth being an act of suicide

Cf. Dr. Wind's pronouncement that pregnancy is "the sublimation of a death wish" (49.28).

184.1 half a dozen years later

That is, around 1931. Pnin escorted Liza to a psychiatric congress in Berlin "sometime in the early thirties" (134.11) and saw Mira there (apparently, for the last time).

184.3 published collection of her poems... (Dry Lips).

Liza's choice of title is also influenced by Akhmatova's early poetry; cf. "Plotno somknuty guby sukhie" [Dry lips are closed tight], or

> I esli b znal ty, kak seichas mne liuby
> Tvoi sukhie, rozovye guby!
>
> [And if you only could imagine how
> I'm tantalized by your dry, pink lips now!]
>
> ("Ne budem pit' iz odnogo stakana"
> [We shall not drink from the same glass], *Rosary*).

Cf. also "my rosy lips" in Liza's poem (181.6).

184.5 To a Stranger from a Stranger... ot neznakomki

A more or less direct reference to Aleksandr Blok's (1880-1921) poem "Neznakomka [Incognita, or The Stranger, 1906]. See n. 181.22. But the inscription also rings once again Akhmatova's yoke-bell—see "Nadoelo mne byt' neznakomkoi" [I am tired of being a stranger], from the poem "Ty pis'mo moe, milyi, ne komkai" [Don't you crumple my letter, darling], 1912.

184.6 I saw Pnin ... whatever.

Like so many images and thoughts found elsewhere in *Pnin*, this snakish, one-hundred-and-thirty-word sentence happens to be a nutshell compendium of a long letter to Wilson on the subject (February 23, 1948: *NW*,194-196), which, as Simon Karlinsky suggests in his footnote (p.196), was written as an indignant reaction to the collection *Discovery of Europe* (New York, 1947), to which Wilson was one of the contributors. Closing his letter, Nabokov wrote, "I think I shall eventually polish this letter and publish it somewhere." Most of the letter's content went either to *Pnin* or *SM* (see Chapter Thirteen, 272).

184.7 apartment of a famous... social revolutionary

The famous émigré's "real-life" antetype in Paris was Ilya Fondaminski, Nabokov's friend and editor (see nn. 110.1 and 116.6). His apartment was on the rue Chernoviz, and Nabokov stayed there during his

first reading tour in Paris in the fall of 1932.

> Fondaminski held open house, a kind of informal literary salon, every Saturday, and Fondaminski's Saturdays and the café located near his house at the end of the rue de Versailles where writers and poets, Nabokov among them, spent many hours constitute something like a spiritual centre for the culture of the Russian diaspora. (*Field-77*, 215)

Nabokov has described many times each professional or political group of Russian émigrés listed in this passage in *Pnin*. The only exception is, perhaps, his mention of "heroic nuns," one of whom could have been the poet and nun, Mother Maria (Elizaveta Kuzmin-Karavaev, née Pilenko, 1891-1945), a self-effacing woman who later participated in the French Resistance and perished in the Ravensbrück concentration camp. By some accounts, she volunteered to go to the gas-chamber in place of a young Jewish woman.

184.17 by astute communist propaganda

Cf. Nabokov's lecture "Russian Writers, Censors and Readers" (1958):

> The question of evolution of liberal thought in Russia before the Revolution has been completely obscured and distorted abroad by astute Communist propaganda in the twenties and thirties... (*Lectures-R*, 2)

184.20 Cheka men

Cheka, a forerunner to the KGB, was the compacted name of *Chrezvychainaia Komissiia po bor'be s kontrrevoliutsiei i sabotazhem* [The Extraordinary Commission for Combatting Counter-Revolution and Sabotage], set up by the Bolsheviks in 1917 and headed by Dzerzhinski and other hatchetmen.

184.22 White Russian military groups

One of the most active among these organizations, the White Warriors Union, was described by Nabokov in "Assistant Producer":

> Unfortunately for its spiritual welfare, it was quite incapable of cutting itself off from monarchist groups abroad and did not feel, as the émigré intelligentsia felt, the dreadful vulgarity, the Ur-Hitlerism of those ludicrous but vicious organizations. (*ND*, 78)

184.25 Pnin's being engaged ... with Kerenski...

The often mentioned in these notes device of recruiting real people to hobnob with fictional characters is closer to its Pushkinian mode here than anywhere else in the novel. I have in mind Canto Seven of *Evgenii Onegin* (xlix, 10): "K nei kak-to V[iazemski] podsel..." [Once Viazemski sat down beside her]. See Nabokov's commentary to this line (quoted in my n. 117.15). See also n. 122.19.

Aleksandr Fedorovich Kerenski (1881-1970), member of the Fourth (1912) Duma (Russian parliament), was Minister of Justice, then of War, in the Provisional Government (1917); finally, and for a short time, he was prime minister, but was ousted by the Bolsheviks in the coup of November, 1917. He eventually settled in Paris and then migrated to America in the thirties.

184.27 "told Timofey everything"... "pardoned" me

Hence Pnin's attitude to N— (of which Hagen, of course, could know nothing—see 170.1).

185.6 Ludmila... I had known in Yalta, Athens, and London

Perhaps, a hint at a previous peripatetic romance, of the sort described in "Spring in Fialta." The choice of places is not unimportant, either: if N—'s route out of Russia had been as close to that of Nabokov as several other details of his life, then these cities were the stops on his way to exile.

185.9 Now, don't believe a word he says, Georgiy Aramovich

This interpellation echoes a sentence in Joyce's *Ulysses,* in a critical cusp where the macintoshed author draws near his creature. Nabokov quotes this place in his lecture on the novel: "Don't you believe a word he says. That man is Leopold M'Intosh, the notorious fireraiser. His real name is—" (*Lectures,* 319).

Julian Connolly's claim that Barakan's first name and patronymic conceal a reference to Georgii Adamovich seems strained (see his "The Real Life of Zhorzhik Uranski," VNRN, 4 [Spring 1980], p.37). It is true, though, that Liza, who is otherwise not terribly fastidious, seems to have a knack for picking lovers named "George" (Zhorzhik Uranski, naturally, excluding).

185.10 He makes up everything ... at examinations

This is odd. In Section One, N— simply reported that Pnin's father

had presented his son to him in 1911 and proudly announced that Timofey had got an A+ in Algebra. Moreover, N— particularly stressed that they had gone to *different* schools (176.30). The jagged rift in the story's fabric widens perceptibly. See *IN-IV*.

185.12 He is a dreadful inventor

A most important pronouncement, no doubt, which naturally cries back, across the expanse of the book, to the seemingly synonymous "evil designer" of Chapter One (23.29) who "had concealed the key of the pattern." However, one should be careful not to assume that the Russian phrase renders the meaning of the English one. Paul Grams makes this error when, upon stating that "the 'evil designer' here is clearly the *uzhasnïy vïdumshchik*," he continues:

> "Nabokov" [he means, N—] is clearly no model of discretion—his designings are evil, his inventings are terrible (*vïdumshchik* also means "liar," "tall-tale teller"). (*Grams*, p.201)

This is not as obvious as it seems. Although Grams's "terrible" and Nabokov's "dreadful" may translate "uzhasnyi" in Russian (and vice versa), in combinations such as "uzhasnyi vydumshchik" the adjective functions as a mere superlative ("he is a first-rate fantast; a terrific liar"), just as "terrible" or "terrific" may mean both "frightful" and "remarkable." The Russian formula only seems to be a literal translation of the "evil designer," and perhaps invites the reader to try that route. Should the two planes, moral and artistic, be ever fused? Can a *good* design (and N—'s design is decidedly superb) be evil? These notes make no attempt at treating such arcana.

185.21 Herr Professor... bizarre details of their voyage

N— has been assiduously collecting these bits for his *Poor Pnin* chapters. He mentions in passing those varied sources throughout Chapter Seven. The sea voyage to the United States is incorporated into Chapter Two (along with Wind's peculiar way of addressing Pnin as "Herr" in English—see n. 178.1).

185.27 very festive and very wet night in 1952

March 6, 1952—see following note.

185.31 the hundredth anniversary of ... death

The "great writer" is Nikolai Gogol, who died on March 4, 1852 (see 186.13).

On January 30, 1952, Edmund Wilson, and about a week later, Nabokov, each received an invitation from the late Ernest J. Simmons to participate in a conference at Columbia University commemorating the centenary of Gogol's death, to be held on March 6. Wilson declined, and in reply to his inquiry Nabokov wrote,

> It was nice of you to warn me of your non-participation in that dismal Gogol affair... Of course, you are right, and " 'tis nonsense all" (as Tatiana Larin and Fanny Price both remarked*). I told them over the snowlined wires that only if they paid a fat fee would I consider, etc. (*N—W*, 272)

One cannot help noting that within the terms of the novel's logic Pnin, while attending the symposium at Columbia, would surely have seen his friend Chateau who taught there; yet in Chapter Five, set in the summer of 1954, N— remarks that they had not met for "at least five years" (see n. 125.8), which may be another barely visible crack on the narration's twofold surface.

In Spring of 1952, Liza visited Pnin at the Clementses' house, where he lodged at the time.

186.5 men of the Eighties... that is... the West Eighties

The term is usually reserved for "men of the Sixties" (*shestidesiatniki*), to name the turbulent literary and political factions and trends of the decade that followed the liberation of Russian serfs (1861) and subsequent reforms (cf. "the Roaring Sixties," 77.8).

186.10 vigorous ducking and twisting of the head

N— dutifully registers this gesture and makes use of it in Chapter Two ("...interrupted Pnin, ducking and pointing," 53.28).

186.12 had not had sufficient time to say

Each participant of the Gogol conference at Columbia had a mere ten minutes to deliver his speech—see Wilson's letter No.197 (*N-W*, 272).

186.13 Homer's and Gogol's use of the Rambling Comparison

Nabokov discusses this aspect of Gogol's art at length in his *Nikolai Gogol* (see especially pp.77-83). Here is the closest example:

> ... here, in the simile of the flies [in the Governor's Party scene in *Dead Souls*], which is a parody of the Homeric rambling comparison, a complete circle is described... (79)

* In Tatiana's letter to Onegin, Canto Three of *Eugene Onegin*, and in Austen's *Mansfield Park*'s Chapter Forty-Four, respectively.

Stephen Jan Parker, who was Nabokov's student at Cornell, recalls that "describing the rambling comparison" in *Dead Souls* and *Inspector General* was a standard question on the final examination (see his "Professor Nabokov: A Review Essay," in *VNRN*, No.8, Spring 1982, p.44).

186.15 professorship at Waindell... Russian Division

N—, the "prominent Anglo-Russian writer," was actually invited by the English Department—see 140.7.

186.24 he turned to other subjects... Italian art dealer

The reader's last chance to catch a furtive glimpse of Victor and Liza, already beyond this novel's fence. One should hope that Victor at least would have a better opportunity to study Old Masters while in Rome—see 127.18.

186.29 two or three days before... Tuesday, February the fifteenth

February 15 is Pnin's birthday. In 1955 it was indeed a Tuesday, and this fact alone mathematically precludes any possibility of this date falling—within the same, i.e. Gregorian, calendar—on Tuesday in 1953 as well (see n. 67.3).

Despite his intentions, Pnin will leave Waindell exactly on his birthday.

186.31 He did not specify his destinantion

Pnin does his best to dodge N— at Waindell; he wants to be utterly free of his meddling presense in his life, and naturally, would not disclose his destination. The reader of Nabokov's next novel knows, however, that four years later Pnin was Head of the Russian Department at Wordsmith University.

187.14 impersonated Pnin... showing me everything

Cockerell's impersonation act is an apogee of the major Resemblance Theme. The imitator has perfected his number to such a degree that he himself has all but turned into a more authentic Pnin than his model (see 189.5). On the other hand, the "real" Pnin, in spite of the extensive knowledge the reader has by now amassed winning through the first six chapters, suddenly becomes a more and more elusive figure, with hazy features, an unknown present (for he slipped out of sight at the end of Chapter Six), a totally unpredictable future, and, what is much more

important, a dubious past. In the cursory show of Pninian gestures, Pninian speech, Pninian anecdotes, to which Cockerell treats his guest, he feeds N— with valuable material which N— will then refit and distribute among the six chapters of the book, to create a plausible cosmos where these anecdotes and gestures suspend a tall arch over a plausible Pnin standing in the limelight.

187.16 Pnin teaching, Pnin eating ... to fall

In N—'s final version, these episodes grew a forest of details which found their way into chapters Two and Three.*

The rather crude story about the fan in the bathroom is replaced by a better one about the "douche" and the heater that Pnin broke at the Clementses' house (Chapter Two).

187.21 Professor Wynn... Professor Pnin

This account undoubtedly engendered the great "Pnin vs. Wynn and Twin" episode included in Chapter Six. Of course, it *could* be Cockerell impersonating Pnin and fooling the ornithologist.

187.25 the Pninian gesture and the Pninian wild English

The two form major supporting themes which wend their way across the novel.

187.27 the silence of Thayer

Cockerell's listener picks up this detail as well—see 147.4 and 157.4.

187.30 Pnin in the Stacks

See Chapter Three, 77.5.

187.31 We heard Pnin criticize the various rooms

See the beginning of Chapter Three.

187.33 Pnin's account of his learning to drive

It is included in Chapter Four, though initially the topic was alotted a special chapter—see "Chapter 4.5."

* The mise en scène with Pnin "ogling a coed" graces the cover of the first (Avon Books, 1959) paperback edition.

188.1 his first puncture

For once, N— does not evolve an episode out of this incident (but check a related Pninian pun in *PF*, p.268; see my n. 26.24.).

188.2 the chicken farm of some Privy Counselor of the Tsar

The insipid assumption, shared by many American intellectuals at the time, that Russian émigrés were mostly dispossessed reactionaries, is ridiculed in section Four of this chapter. In a letter to Wilson, Nabokov notes with a scornful shrug that Stanley Hyman called him in print a "Czarist Liberal" (*N—W*, 205).

Humbert Humbert sardonically dubs Maximovich (who actually represents just the Russian type that Cockerell has in mind) a "former Counselor of the Tsar" (*Lolita*, 32).

See n. 114.1 on the possible trace of a "chicken theme" (degenerating into a "dog theme"): the rooster ("vocal coxcomb")—Praskovia's "chickens"—eloquent Cockerell and the "chicken farm"—his "cocker spaniel" Sobakevich barking during the Pnin Number and yapping at Pnin's dog in the last scene.

188.4 We arrived at last... "shot" ... "fired"

In less than a page's length the entire story of Pnin's life at Waindell has been thumbed. Cockerell now proceeds to furnish the crowning anecdote (which is not included in Chapter Six and must have taken place, if at all, sometime after Pnin's party, in the fall of 1954). N—, who thinks that even Pnin could not possibly have allowed such a lapse, does not use this detail in section Twelve of Chapter Six (the "Breaking the News" episode)—see 169.27 and again 170.9.

188.8 strange feud between Pnin and his compatriot

N—, also Pnin's compatriot, finds nothing strange in it and explains the nature of Pnin's and Komarov's mutual resentment: "Only another Russian could understand the reactionary and Sovietophile blend presented by the pseudo-colorful Komarovs..." (71.28). On the other hand, Cockerell is, of course, one of Pnin's American colleagues who "deemed the Komarovs 'grand people' and mimicked droll Pnin" (see n. 72.2).

188.10 fresco portraits... Blorenge... Hagen... Poore

The mural is depicted at the very beginning of Chapters One (9.21) and Three (71.9). Some of the most vividly described characters are summoned here for the farewell parade.

188.31 old dog Sobakevich

"Sobaka" is Russian for dog, and Sobakevich is an ursine land-owner in Gogol's *Dead Souls*. That the Cockerells should have a cocker for a pet is a more obvious offshoot of the same joke. See nn. 114.1 and 188.2.

189.3 the whole thing ... initial ridicule

This may be a pointer to N—'s methods of composing his book about Pnin for which Cockerell must have been a prominent source. As the fun of the thing rubs off, the first-time reader ought to feel that what he has learned to take for a reliable image of bald, quaint, pedantic, pathetic dear poor Pnin may well be an improved version of Cockerell's masterly impersonation. The "true Pnin" fades and vanishes. See *IN-IV*: 3-5.

189.16 actual ringing in an imaginary hallway... heavy breathing

This is a resounding echo of Pnin's call in Chapter Two: "the hallway telephone took over (30.33)... a hollow quiet greeted her; all she could hear was the informal sound of a steady breathing..." (31.10).

189.24 he has quite gone

This is hardly just another example of Pnin's lame English, for, in a sense, he is already beyond N—'s manipulative reach.

189.27 "at" ... "Goneril"

Pnin's pronunciation is discussed in the same vein, and with similar examples, in section Three of Chapter Three (see p.66). Note the last droning sound of the Shakespeare Theme which culminates also in Chapter Three.

190.3 omnibus edition of Sherlock Holmes... pursued me for years

In one of his interviews, among the books he enjoyed as a boy Nabokov mentions the Conan Doyle series (*SO*, 43). See n. 86.16. In a letter to Wilson (of February the Sixteenth, 1946), he writes that he read *Sherlock Holmes* while ill in bed: "This fat volume has been a good companion" (*N—W*, 163).

For a good summary of the famed detective's appearances in Nabokov's works see Appel's note to Chapter Fourteen of *Lolita* (pp. 363-364).

190.5 the set of galleys I had brought with me to correct

One wonders exactly what manuscript N— was proofreading that night. Nabokov, meanwhile, was busy correcting the galleys of Chapter Three of *Pnin* which was to be published on *his* birthday in the *New Yorker*.

190.15 in the company of... dejected Sobakevich

There is something pleasantly pathetic in the fact that N— should be accompanied by a Gogolian canine for his last encounter with his hero who is also escorted by a dog en route out of the book.

190.19 tall leafless poplar

N—, unlike Pnin, is well versed in dendrology. See n. 191.15.

190.22 crenulated

Wilson thought it was a slip and suggested "crenellated" instead (see *N—W*, 310). Karlinsky, in a footnote to the letter, points out that Wilson is off the track "since 'crenulated' and not 'crenellated' is clearly indicated by the context" (*idem*). Although it is true that, in strict architectural terms, "crenellated" is reserved for a specially embattled molding, the two words can be synonymous when denoting fine scalloping of leaves and hence of any edge in general.

190.24 Turkish Consulate ... crowds of fez wearers

These must be Shriners ("The Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine for North America"), a semi-masonic philanthropic fraternity.

190.29 great truck... small... sedan... another great truck

Pnin's car squeezed between two trucks makes a nice pictograph of his imprisonment in this thick-walled, well-guarded fortress of his life-story. Presently, however, he will break away, "boldly swinging past the front truck."

191.6 to catch him while the red light... at bay

This chase in pursuit of the hero by his narrator somehow conjures up the image of that endearing old witch, *Baba Iaga*, who throws up one obstacle after another while hounding, in a huge flying mortar, Ivan the Fool who gallops away with his precious loot in hundreds of Russian fairy-

tales. The "red-light" is the very last, very feeble trick up N—'s ample sleeve. It does not stop the runaway, however, for the light turns green as soon as N— catches up with Pnin, and the next moment he is "quite gone."

191.14 receding in the frame... narrowing... beauty of distance

In his first interview with Nabokov (1966), Appel posed him this question:

> Ideally, how should a reader experience or react to "the end" of one of your novels, that moment when the vectors are removed and the fact of the fiction is underscored, the cast dismissed?...

The answer was,

> ...what I would welcome at the close of a book of mine is a sensation of its world receding in the distance and stopping somewhere there, suspended afar like a picture in a picture: *The Artist's Studio* by Van Bock. (*SO*, 72-73)

Pnin is a perfect reproduction of that picture-in-a-picture closing. The parting with the hero, and the reader, tarries, projected as it is into a steep and exaggerated perspective, as if the pale blue sedan with Pnin in it had disappeared but the cloudlet of smoke still lingered over the book's horizon, blending with a distant cloud before vanishing altogether. Nabokov creates the same spheroconic perspective in "Spring in Fialta," in a passage prefiguring the actual crash at the end:

> ...the three of them wearing motoring helmets, getting in, smiling and waving to me, transparent to me like ghosts, with the color of the world shining through them [cf. the close of *IB*], and then they were moving, receding, diminishing... (*ND*, 33)

Their automobile is "smooth and whole like an egg" (*idem*), and it is doomed to be squashed like one when they ram into the circus truck. Pnin, the erratic driver of an "egg-shaped" car (112.24), will be spared Nina's fate.

The incurvate vista is produced, no doubt, by that "very special and very magical small convex mirror" that was painted by Van Bock into the middle of Chapter Four (97.31), thus in the geometrical center of the novel.

Appendices

All page references in these Appendices are to the first (hardbound) edition of *Pnin*.

A. DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The list includes all persons, acting or merely mentioned, named or anonymous, real or invented, in alphabetic order, with a page reference (and cross references when needed).

An asterisk indicates peripheral, "Gogolian," characters who leave no footprint on the plot's path. Names marked by two asterisks belong to "real" persons recruited as characters in the novel (I discuss both types in *IN-III* and in the commentary).

Some characters form family nests; in such cases the names of those related to the entry header are indented, and if further subjunction occurs, the entry is further indented.

The list includes 318 entries. The number of generally acknowledgeable individuals, dead or quick, mentioned in the novel but not cast as characters (such as famed authors, artists, scholars etc.) adds up to 96, or about thirty percent of all names encountered.

Akhmatova, Anna 45, 180
Aksakov, Sergei 4
Aldanov, Mark 117
Alger, Horatio 164
Ancharov, provincial actor (see Khodotov) 178-179
Andersen, Hans Christian ("bedside Dane") 89
Anglo-Russian writer 140 (see N—)
Angst, Augusta, psychotherapist 91
Arbenins, the, Pnin's friends in Paris 109
Aristotle 9
Attendant at the Onkwedo gas station 114
Aura, Rudolph, psychotherapist 139

*Backman, Frank, Pnin's student 67
*Balsamo, Rose, Pnin's student 67
*Banker, Liza's admirer 45
Barakan, Georgii Aramovich, neurologist 180, 185
  *Ludmila (Lady D—), his cousin 185
*Barber 48 (see Gardener)
  *His wife 48
Bartholomew, the Saint 93
Beauvoir, Simone de 138
*Bednyashkin, Ivan, Pnin's friend 27
Belochkin, Grigorii Yakovlevich, Mira's brother 131, 177-179
Belochkin, Mira Yakovlevna, 27, 131-135, 179
  *Her husband, a fur dealer 132, 134
Belochkin, Yakov Grigorievich, pediatrician 22, 132
  *Mrs. Belochkin, his wife 132
Béranger, Pierre Jean 142
**Beust, Graf Fridrich Ferdinand von 122
**Bièvre, [Maréchal, Marquis de ?] 91
Blake, Percival 86
Bliss, Elisabeth, a graduate student 9, 16, 19, 42-43, 151-166
  *Her fiancé, biochemist 152
  *Her fiancé's cousin 163
Blorenge, Leonard 30-31, 139-143, 169, 188
*Blorenge, Ann, his wife 30, 36-37, 141, 160
*Boke, Lance, Victor's classmate 101
Bolotov, professor of philosophy 117-122, 129
Bolotov, Varvara, his wife 118, 120-123, 130-131
  Bolotov, Nina, their daughter 119
  *Vinogradov, Lidia, her aunt 120
Boulanger, George, French General 142
*Brade, Tony, Victor's classmate 101
Bunin, Ivan 117

*Bus driver 19-20

Carrol, Frieze Hall janitor 147-148
Carrol, Frank, his son 67, 147
Carroll, Lewis 65 ["Alice in Wonderland"]
Case, librarian 78
Cervantes, Miguel de 16 ["Don Quixote"]
Chaplin, Charlie 80
Chateau, Konstantin Ivanovich 34, 46, 50-52, 118-19, 125-29, 136, 183
Chateaubriand, Viscount François René de 37, 141
**Chekhov, Anton, Russian writer and physician 42, 176
*Chertok, Svetlana, Mira's husband's first wife 132
Chistovich, Iakov 119
Chris and Lew, "twittering Englishmen" 181-182 (see Starrs)
Christus, Petrus 97
*Church, George [?], Liza's third husband 86
Clements, Joan Two: *passim*, 65, 74, 83, 154-66
Clements, Laurence G. Two: *passim*, 65, 74, 154-166
  *Isabel, their daughter 29, 35, 61, 65, 74, 83, 158
  *Her husband, an engineer 29
*Clergyman, New Jersey School principal 93
Clyde, Judith, Cremona Women's Club Vice-President 9, 27-28
Cockerell, Jack 31, 140, 156, 187-191
Cockerell, Gwen, his wife 36, 187-189
Conductor in Pnin's train 8, 15-16
Confucius 71
Cooper, Fenimore 14
*Cossack No.1 (Joan Clements's acquaintance) 34
*Cossack No.2, Komarov's father 71
*Cossack No.3, Praskovia's (q.v.) husband 119
*Crates, professor at Goldwin 37
Cronin, Archibald, doctor and writer 64

Dali, Salvador 96
Degas, Edgar 96
Denikin, Anton 134
Desdemona, the Clementses' charwoman 40
*Dingwall, Miss, the Clementses' neighbor 30, 33
Doctor in Paris ("deaf-and-dumb") 47
Dostoevski, Fyodor 10 ["Anna Karamazov"], 16, 27, 42, 63, 71, 109 and 136 ["Crime and Punishment"], 138
Dreiser, Theodore 138
*Dub, Ivan, Pnin's ghost student 9
*Dudley-Greene family 123
Dunkelberg, Albina, psychotherapist 50

Edison, Thomas 14
*Edward, the Prince of Wales 122
*Eisenbohr, Miss, Hagen's (q.v.) secretary 15
Entwistle, professor at Goldwin 30, 36-37
Everett, "Jim," professor 105
Evil designer 23 et seq. (See N—)

Falternfels, Bodo von 70, 82, 138-139, 142, 163, 168
*Fogelman, "expert in bats" 162
*"Frankfurter," newspaper editor 48
French woman 46
*Frieze, Alpheus 72, 82

Galsworthy, John 138
*Gardener 48 (see Wrestler)
  *His wife 48
Garnett, Constance 64
*Geller, Mikhail, Mme Shpolyanski's brother 132
*George I, Desdemona's (q.v.) beau 40
*George II, psychopatient's husband 51
*George III, Liza's lover 56-57 (see Church [?])
*George IV, the Saint, 154
Glupyshkin (André Deed) 81
Godunov, psychotherapist 90
Goethe, Wolfgang von 16 ["Faust"], 112, 135
Gogol, Nikolai 186
*Gotovtsev, orientalist 106
Gramineev, Ivan Ilyich, a painter 126-127
Gresset, Jean Baptiste de 44

Hagen, Herman 9, 11, 15-16, 34, 36, 42, 135, Six: *passim*, 188
  *Irmgard, his wife 36, 147, 156, 160, 166
  *His daughter 61, 80, 170
  *His grandfather, a pastor 165, 167
*Halp, psychotherapist 183
*Hashimoto, French instructor 142
Hauptmann, Gerhart 169
*Head, John 110 (see Sheppard, Bill)
*Helm, O. George, the Clementses' doctor 31

Herder, Gottfried 135
*Herring, Miss, retired history professor 28
*Hertz, Irving D., Pnin's student 67
Hoecker, a painter 34
*Hohn, Marilyn, Pnin's student 67, 113
Homer 186
Hopper, Archibald, the Reverend 54, 94-95, 101-102
His wife 54, 102
*Horn, Bob, a clerk at the Whitchurch station 17-18, 25
*His pregnant wife 18, 25
*His substitute 18-19
*Horn, Robert Karlovich, a steward 178 (see Horn, Bob)
Hunt, William 34
Hugo, Victor 141

*Idelson, mathematics professor 147
*His wife, a sculptress 147, 160
*Ivan Hristoforovich, Pnin's friend 105

Jung, Karl, Swiss psychologist 105

*Karen, Dorianna, an actress 159, 166 ["old Lesbian"]
Käsebier, Gertrude, a photographer 95
Kent, psychotherapist 91 (see Rosanoff)
**Kerenski, Aleksandr, statesman and Pnin's friend 184
**Khodotov, "great ham actor" 27 (see Ancharov)
King, Victor's father 84-85 (see Solus Rex)
Komarov, Oleg, a muralist 71-72, 80, 82, 188
Komarov, Serafima, his wife 71
Kostromskoy, Russian ethnographer 77-78
Kotzebue, August von 135, 161
*Kraft, Seaboard professor 139 ["an old friend"], 168-169
Kroneberg, Andrey, Russian translator 79
*Krotki, John 39
*Krotki, Olga, his wife 39, 148
*Kukolnikov, Aleksandr Petrovich 115-116, 123
*Kukolnikov, Piotr, his father 116

*Lacefield, Linda, poetess and prosaist 27
*Lady in Dr. Pnin's waiting room 175
*Her husband 175
*Her lover, a cavalry officer 175
Laius, King 88
Iocasta, his wife 88
Oedipus, their son 88
Lake, St. Bart's Art teacher 95-97
*Lane, Eileen, Pnin's student 10, 13
*Lang, a painter 71, 188
Lecturer 169 (see N—)
Lenin, N., Marxist author 87, 116
Lermontov, Mikhail 61, 105, 116
Leskov, Nikolai 12
Linder, Max 81
Littérateur 45 (see N—)
**Lobachevski, Nikolay 89
London, Jack 100
*London, Yakov, psychotherapist 108
Loon, Hendrik Willem van, 64

*McBeth, Charles, Pnin's student 10, 13, 35
McCarthy, Joseph, U.S. Senator 155
*McCrystal, Pnin's landlady 69
*Malkin, Josephine, Pnin's student 10, 13
Mallarmé, Stéphane 137
Mandeville, Sir John 138
*Mann, Oliver Bradstreet, a Slavist 10, 39
Mann, Thomas 138
Marshall, Susan (Mrs. Aleksandr Kukolnikov) 116, 123, 130-132
*Marshall, Charles G., her father 116
*Maywood, Bernard, Liza's lover 50, 53, 57
*Mead, John, Pnin's student 67
Memling, Hans 97
*Messenger 85-86
*Miller, instructor, then associate professor 15, 38, 69, 147
*Miller, Charlotte, his wife 147
Moinet 98 (see Wind, Victor)
*Moore, a visiting professor at Cremona W.C. 26
*Mopsuestia, Miss 142

N—, Vladimir Vladimirovich *passim*
Mrs. N—, his mother 177
His young brother 177
N—, the late General, his great-uncle 133
Mrs. N—, General's widow, his great-aunt 133, 177
Her footman 177
N—'s relative ("Russian lady") 47
N—'s tutor 175-176
*Nagoy, Ivan, a poet and hedonist 180

Napoleon I, Emperor of France 28, 188
Nicholas I, Emperor of Russia 168
Nietzsche, Friedrich 138

*Oblonski, Stepan 122
Old friend 169 (see Lecturer)
*Old maid 179 (see Pnin's Aunt)
Old man, sitting on the bench 20, 23-24
Old woman, soundlessly clapping 28
Orczy, Emmuska 86 ["Scarlet Pimp"]
Ostrovski, Aleksandr 12

Paele, van der, the Canon 154
Pasteur, Louis 9
*Pennant, teacher at St. Bart's 86
Picasso, Pablo 96
Pnin, Timofey Pavlovich, Assistar
Professor *passim*
*Pnin, Pavel Antonovich, his father 2
27, 75, 132-33, 175-76
*Pnin, Valeria (née Umov), his mothe
21-22, 28, 75, 132
*Umov, Pnin's maternal grandfather 2
*Mrs. Umov, Pnin's grandmother 22
A maidservant to the Pnins 22
*Pnin's aunt 27 (see Old maid)
Poe, Edgar Allan 14
*Polyanski, Ilya Isidorovich 109-110, 18
["a famous émigré"]
Poore, Samuel 70, 80, 135, 140, 148, 18
*His niece 70, 148
*Popov, doctor 75
Poroshin, Count Fyodor Nikolaevich 11
Countess Poroshin, his wife 118, 130
Igor, his son 118, 130
Olga, his daughter 118
*Her admirer 119
Praskovia, the Kukolnikovs' (q.v.) mai
119
Pushkin, Aleksandr 28, 65, 67-68, 77, 9
**Pushkin, Natalia Nikolaevna, his wif
42

Raskolnikov, Rodion Romanych,
student 136
**Reade, Frank, President of Georgi
College 148
Rembrandt 95
Rockwell, Norman, an illustrator 96
Rolland, Romain 142
Rorschach, Hermann, a Swiss auguru 9
Rosanoff, Joshua, psychotherapist 91 (se
Kent)
Rosetta Stone, see Stone, Rosetta
*Roux, Mme, concierge 8

Saleswoman at a bookstore 99
Mr. "Tweed," her husband 100
*Samuil Izrailevich, Pnin's friend 105
Schiller, Friedrich 135
Schnitzler, Arthur 178
*Schonberg, Julius, wool manufacturer 94
*Schonberg, Samuel, his brother 94
*Schwarz, a Goldwin professor 37
Seton, Ernest Thompson 164
Shakespeare, William 9, 32 ("Hamlet"), 79
("Hamlet"), 86 ("Winter Tale" and
"Tempest")
*Shapiro, English professor 157
Sheppard, Bill, Pnin's landlord 100, 107-
108, 110
Sheppard, Bob, his brother 107, 110
*Sheppard, Martin, his late uncle 144
Mrs. Sheppard, his widow 159
Their eldest son 159
*Head, John, Bill's relation 110
*Wells, Grace, Bill's mother's school-
mate 107
Shpolyanski, Samuil L'vovich 117
Shpolyanski, Rosa Abramovna (née
Geller), his wife 121, 130-132
Shostakovich, Dmitri 63
Sirin, V. 117
*Slavski, professor of French 140-141
*Slavski, Carolina, his wife 143
**Sloan, Samuel, American architect 123
Smith, French instructor 142
Soldier 8, 16
Solus Rex 84-85 (see King)
Squirrel 23-24, 58, 73, 88, 115, 158, 177
**Stalin 81-82
Stanislavski, Konstantin (real name,
Alekseev) 136
*Starrs, Christopher and Louise 63, 80,
138 (see Sterns)
Stendhal (Henri Beyle) 138
*Sterns, Louis and Christina 90, 91 ("Lou
and Tina"), 92
Stone, Rosetta, psychotherapist 44
*Stowe, English professor 156
Swain, Mack 80

**Taneev, Sergei 43 ("a stoopid moozi-
shan with red noz")
Thayer, Margaret, librarian 31-32, 74, 147,
155-164

Thayer, Roy, her husband 147, 155-164, 187
*Mrs. Thayer's mother (Joan Clements's aunt) 64, 74
*Eileen, Mrs. Thayer's sister's granddaughter 158
Thomas, Tristram W., Anthropology professor 138, 150, 154-165
*Todd, John Thurston, a Slavist 77, 79
**Tolstoy, Count Lyov Nikolaevich 10 (*Anna Kar—*), 21, 43, 73, 106 (*Anna Karenin*), 107 (*Death of Ivan Ilyich*), 122 and 129-130 (*Anna Karenin*), 136
**Tolstoy, Countess Sofia Andreevna (née Bers) 42
Toulouse-Lautrec, Henri de 64
*Trebler, Robert 30
Truman, Harry, U.S. President 14
Turgenev, Ivan 42, 147 ("How fair, how fresh...")

*Uranski, George (Zhorzhik), hack journalist 45

Vadim Vadimich, Pnin's old friend 128 (see Old friend)
Van Eyck, Jan 97, 154
Van Gogh, Vincent 96, 108
Vengerov, Semion, a philologist 79
Veteran psychoanalyst 21
Viardot, Pauline (née Garcia), a singer 42
Vinci, Leonardo da 98
Vladimir Vladimirovich N— 105 (see N—)
*Volkov, Peter, Pnin's student 67

Wagner, Richard 71
*Walsh, Allan Bradbury, Pnin's student 67
Wieland, Christoph 135
Wind, Eric, psychotherapist 46-57, 86-92, 110, 112, 185
*Andersen, Hans, his great-grandfather 89
*A Hamburg jeweler, Eric's grandfather 89
*Mrs. Wind, his first wife 46
Wind, Liza, formerly Mrs. Pnin 43-58, 86-94, 135, 180-185
*Bogolepov, Feofilakt, her great-grandfather 89
*Her fourth husband, art dealer 186
Wind, Victor 55, Four: *passim*; 127, 153, 158, 186
*Women with a baby on the train 8, 17
*Wrestler, Pnin's cabin mate on the ship 48 (see Barber)
*His wife 48
Wynn, Thomas, Ornithology professor 149, 187

Zhukovski, Vasilii 77

B. CHRONOGRAPH

The events listed below are arranged chronologically. Roman numbers refer to the chapter which contains the item. Square brackets enclose the dates obtained through oblique textual evidence, and other hypothetical data. Bold-faced section at the end of the chronograph describes events actually happening in the novel between 1950 and 1955.

The pre-1918 dates are given in the Gregorian calendar.

1898

February 15, Tuesday: Pnin's birthday. I, III.

1899

April 22: N—'s birthday. VII.

1909

Mid-winter, a Sunday: Pnin contracts pneumonia. I.

1911

[April 23], Sunday: N— catches a speck in the eye. VII.
[April 24], Monday: N— meets Pnin. VII.

1912

Fall: Pnin recites a poem by Pushkin at the *gimnaziia*. I.

1916

Spring: Pnin graduates from St. Petersburg University. V.
July-August: Trysts with Mira at the Baltic resort. V.
N— meets Pnin for the second time. *Liebelei*. VII.

1917

November-December: Pnin's parents die of typhus. II.

1918

[Winter]: Pnin leaves St. Petersburg, moves to Kiev, then joins the White Army for five months. II.

1919

Pnin finds himself in Odessa [VI], where his friend, Vanya Bednyashkin, is killed by the Bolsheviks. I. Later that year he drifts to the Crimea and leaves Russia for Constantinople. II.

1920

July 4: His first "dissolving" seizure occurs. I.

1924 or 1925

Pnin receives a degree from the University of Prague. I.
April, 1925: Pnin meets Liza in Paris. II.
April: N— meets Pnin for the third time; has a brief affair with Liza. VII.
May: Liza attempts suicide [II, VII]; Pnin proposes to her; she accepts later that year. II, VII.

1929

May 28: Pnin's second "heart attack." I.

Early 1930s

Pnin meets Mira for the last time, in Berlin. V.

[1931]

N— revisits Paris and meets Pnin at the Polyanskis. VII. Isabel Clements is born. VI.

[1934]

Pnin wins a smoking jacket at a charity bazaar in Paris. VI.

1935-1936

N— meets Chateau in Grasse. V.

1937

February 15: Pnin has his third attack. I.

1938

December: Liza jilts Pnin. II.

1940

April: Liza returns to Pnin for a brief spell [II];
May: They depart for the U.S.; Eric Wind "identifies himself" on the ship. II.
[June]: Victor is born. II, IV.

1942

August 10: Pnin experiences his fourth seizure. I. Mira is killed at Buchenwald [?]. V.

1945

Pnin and the Winds naturalize in the U.S. II. Pnin begins teaching at Waindell. II.

1947

Victor is tested at the Psychiatric Institute. IV.

1949

Pnin speaks at a Russian welcome-party in New York. V.

1949-1950

Winter: Pnin lives in Mrs. McCrystal's house. III.

1950

October [13], Friday: Pnin delivers a lecture at Cremona. I.

1951

[Christmas]: Pnin moves to the Clementses' house. II.

1952

February-March, a Saturday: Liza visits Pnin at Waindell. II.
[March 6]: N— meets Pnin in New York. VII.
[Fall]: Victor enters St. Bart's. IV.

1953

February 15, "Tuesday": Pnin's typical day at Waindell. III.

1954

[Mid-April]: Victor visits Pnin at Waindell. IV.
[April or May]: Pnin in the hospital; later, in May, he takes the driver's tests.
[Early June a Friday]: Pnin arrives at The Pines. V.
[September]: Pnin gives a party. VI.

1955

February 14, Monday: N— arrives at Waindell. VII.
February 15, Tuesday: Pnin leaves Waindell and the book. VII.

1959

July 21: Gradus crashes into Pnin's office at Wordsmith. *Pale Fire*.

C. TOPONYMY

The list includes only specific places mentioned in *Pnin*, such as towns and hydronyma, and the page in which they appear. Larger items (states, countries) are omitted. Names printed in bold-face denote locations where the novel's action takes place, even if in retrospect. Other loci are merely mentioned by the characters. Brackets enclose places which, although not mentioned, can be topographically reconstructed. An asterisk marks those which cannot be found on our map in their expected locations.

Albany 53, 102-103
Albanopolis, see Derbent
Athens 185

Baltic resort [near Riga?] 114, 133, 177
Berlin 68, 86, 134
Biarritz 177
***"Bohemian Sea" (at Tempest Point)** 86, 110
Bordeaux 47
Boston 52, 119
Buchenwald 135
Budapest 85
Buffalo 86, 107

Chicago 75
***Cranton, Mass.** 93, 97, 102, 157
***Cremona** 8, 16-19, 25
Constantinople [31], 33, [43], [54]

Derbent (USSR) 93
Ellis Island (New York bay) 11, 50
*Ettersberg, Grosser, Germany 135
***Ettrick, Mount** [south Vermont?] 111-112, 114

Framingham, Mass. 102-103

*Goldwin 30, 37
Grasse 125
Graz 85

Hammond (Indiana?) 75
Harbin 116, 119
Havana 155
*Isola (Waindell suburb) 146

Kazan' 144
Kharkov 144
Kiev 33

Ladoga, Lake 174
Lipari Island 93
London 185

[Maribor, Slovenia] 85
Messina 94
Meudon 44, 46
Miami 75
Minsk 10
Montpelier (France) 46
Moscow 24, 127

New York 27, 46, 50, 62, 119, 158, 185-186
Neva River 174
New Haven, Conn. 187

Odessa 27, 160
Onega Lake 120
Ohrida Lake 120
*Onkwedo [Vermont?] 111-114
*Onkwedo Lake 120, 123

Paris 8, 33, 36, 47, 95, 151, 179-184
Pines, The [near West Brattleboro, VT ?] Chapter Four: *passim*.
*Pningrad 63
Prague 8, 11, 33, 68

Quito, Ecuador 110

Rome 95, 186
*Rudbern, Mass. 102

Santa Clara, Cuba 162
St. Petersburg 33, 45, 67-68, 76, 174
A dacha in St. Petersburg's vicinity ("latitude of Labrador") 106
N—'s estate near St. Petersburg 177
*Seaboard 139, 169

Trieste 85

*Vandel, France 140
Vienna 86
Volga River 10 ["Mother Volga"], 77

***Waindell** [upstate New York?] passim
*Waindellville 63, 79, 107, 147
Washington, D.C. 69, 135
Weimar 135
***Whitchurch** 17, 21
Windward Islands, in the Carribean 155

Yalta 16, [33], 185
Yosemite, California 153

Zagreb 85

D. FLORA AND FAUNA

Bold-faced items represent fauna obtained in *Pnin*, the rest being the names of various plants, or of their fruit or wood. Each entry has a page reference. I chose not to supply proper Latin names (excepting all lepidoptera and one tricky plant) because all unusual or doubtful plants and animals inhabiting the novel are taxonomically defined in the appropriate places in the Commentaries.

Alder 127
Ant 115
Apple-tree 127
Aspen 145
Avocado pear 90

Beech 111, 135 (Beechwood)
Bilberry 120
Birch-tree 82, 120, 145
Buttercup 77
Butterflies:
  Blues [*Lycaeides samuelis* Nab.] 128
  Monarch [*Danaus plexippus* L.] 138
  Morpho [Fabricius] 92
  Paphia Fritillary [*Argynnis* L.] 177

Cactus 33
Canary 120
Cat 34, 43, 60
Catalpa 120
Chestnut-tree 20
Columbine 158
Cottonwood 108, 110
Cow 127
Cuckoo 149

Daisy 82
Dogs:
  Alsatian (German Shepherd) 165
  Cocker-spaniel ["Sobakevich"] 188, 190-191
  English shepherd dogs 93
  Scotch-terrier 30, 33
  Unspecified 63 and 69-70
  A white mongrel 171, 191
Donkey 31
Dragonfly 128

Elm 73, 97, 144

Fir tree 76, 144
Fish moth 48
Flamingo 156
Fly 175
Frog orchis [*Habenaria viridis* L.] 77

Goldenrod 126
Grape 152, 157
Grapefruit 53, 153
"Green insect" [a trichopteron?] 172

Hautbois [Green Strawberry] 132
Horses 73, 82
Horsefly 129
Hummingbird 120

Ivy 93, 144

Kid 34

Laurel 19, 125
Lilacs 85, 145
Lily 23
Lime 145
Locust Tree 117
Lupine 121

Mangosteen 92
Maple tree 111
Melon 31
Monopode 22
Mosquito 136
[Mulberry?] 145
Mushrooms (unspecified) 82, 117 ["toadstools"]

Nettle tree 125

Oak 20, 23-24, 145
Orange 90, 190
Oriole 149

Palm Tree 138
Peach 25
Pheasant 145
Pigeon 73, 158
Pine tree 18, 23, 117, 121, 127, 136, 141
Plum 90
Poison-ivy 120
Poplar 145, 190-191 [Lombardy]

Porcupine 120

Racemosa bird cherry 82
Rhododendron 19, 23-24
Rooster 114
Rosewood 124
Rowanberry 153

Satinwood 124
Scrub oak 141
Skunk 120
Skylark 150 [*alouette*, *zhavoronok*], 157
Spruce 109, 144
Squirrel 23-24, 58, 73, 88, [115], 158, 177
Strawberry, Garden 132
Sycamore 145

Tacamahac 111
Tobacco flower 133

Willow tree 77, 145
Yellow Warbler 120

E. CHROMATOGRAPH

Colors and shades of colors used in *Pnin* are arranged here first in alphabetic order; next, in the order of natural spectrum (with one minor deviation), both chromatic and achromatic, along with incidence and relative percentage calculations; and, finally, a simplified chart shows distribution of colors by chapter.

The system of color representation I employ follows the traditional technical terminology and color definition (as found, for instance, in the Color Tables of the Second and the Third editions of the Webster's New International Dictionary).

I. Colors and Hues in *Pnin*.

Each entry is followed by the number of the page where it appears.* If one color is used more than once on a page, it is registered as many times.

Amber 98, 172
Amber-brown 138
Aqua 26
Aquamarine 44, 153, 172
Auburn 44, 108, 125, 179

Beige 156
Black 15, 19, 26, 29, 30, 44 (twice), 55 (twice), 63, 73, 78, 80, 84, 88, 89, 97 (twice), 99, 103, 108, 110, 138, 154, 156 (thrice), 159, 164, 176 (six times), 179, 180, 182, 185
Blond 177
Blue 26, 31, 85, 97, 103, 127-9, 151, 159 (twice), 165, 175, 180, 182
Bluish 158
Brown 7, 52, 55, 57, 63, 87, 103, 129, 156, 171, 180, 188
Brownish 103
Buff 178

Cadmium red 96
Carmine 85, 159
Cherry-red 145
Cobalt-blue 96, 97
Cream 190

Dark blue 154
Dark brown O
Dark red 184
Deep-red 182
Dove-gray 158 [columbine, *sizyi*], 182

Ember-red 136
Emerald-and-gray 85

Garnet 58
Gray 46, 50, 73, 95, 97, 108 (twice), 151, 152, 154, 159
Gray-blue 190
Grayish blue 73
Green 19, 24, 36, 45, 46, 49, 65, 69, 121, 146, 172, 182
Greenish blue 158
Grizzled 156
Golden 132, 156, 180

Indigo 174

Lavender gray 96
Light blue 44
Light red 44
Lilac 7, 40

Madder 98
Magenta 71
Mahogany 71, 128
Mauve 45, 71
Metallic 177

Navy blue O

*In two instances, marked by "O," I have failed to restore the page reference cited erroneously on my original index card.

Olive-green 73
Opalescent 31
Orange 96, 128, 146

Pale-blue 24, 112, 145, 190
Pale-green 96
Pearly 38, 156
Pink 12, 34, 38, 44, 55, 65, 98, 120, 126, 129, 146, 151, 156, 163, 171
Platinum 34
Purple 19, 23, 24, 126
Purplish 35

Red 10, 43, 46, 70, 93, 98, 99, 102, 127, 131, 141, 156, 176
Reddish 23, 48
Reddish-brown 104
Rose-red 134
Rosy 95, 103, 174, 181
Ruddy 39, 164
Russet 177
Rust 145

Sapphire 181
Scarlet 7
Silver 49, 177
Silvery 29, 82
Sky-blue 82
Slate-gray 30
Snow-and-rose 44
Straw 176
Strontian 96

Tawny 11
Tortoise-shell 79

Urine 22

Violet 96, 137, 146
Violet-blue 78

Warm-taupe 179
White 8, 29, 34, 44, 55, 61, 65, 73, 75, 80, 82, 84, 126 (twice), 133, 156, 163, 171, 190, 191

Yellow 69, 173

II. Colors in the Order of Spectrum

Figures that follow a color or a nest of colors represent the total incidence of that color or that group in the novel. Numbers in parentheses express the share, in percentages, each color has relative to the entire spectrum in *Pnin* (first figure) and to this color's chromatic range (second figure). For example, entry "**Greens** 15 (6/10)" means that hues comprising the green range in the book's spectrum occur fifteen times and make up six per cent of all colors employed in *Pnin* and ten per cent of its chromatic colors.

Within color ranges, hues are arranged alphabetically, incremental differences in brilliance and saturation being ignored.

I have excluded from this list iridescent, mottled, and hybrid colorations (e.g., opalescent, tortoise-shell, and snow-and-rose, respectively—see section I of this appendix); they have, nonetheless, been accounted for in aggregate calculations.

1. Achromatic (neutral) Colors Total: 81, or 34%

Black 40 (17/49)

Grays 19 (8/24)
gray 11
grizzled 1
metallic 1
platinum 1
silver 2
silvery 2
slate-gray 1

Whites 22 (9/27)
pearly 2
white 20

2. Chromatic Colors Total: 156, or 66%

A. "Warm Spectrum" (Brown to Yellow) 59%

Browns 24 (10/16)
- amber brown 1
- auburn 4
- brown 12
- brownish 1
- dark brown 1
- reddish brown 1
- russet 1
- rust 1
- tawny 1
- warm taupe 1

Reds and Oranges 53 (23/34)
- cadmium red 1
- carmine 2
- cherry red 1
- dark red 1
- deep red 1
- ember red 1
- garnet 1
- light red 1
- madder 1
- mahogany 2
- orange 3
- pink 15
- red 13
- reddish 2
- rose-red 1
- rosy 4
- ruddy 2
- scarlet 1

Yellows 14 (6/9)
- amber 2
- beige 1
- blond 1
- buff 1
- cream 1
- golden 3
- straw 1
- strontian 1
- urine 1
- yellow 2

B. "Cold Spectrum" (Green to Purple) 41%

Greens 15 (6/10)
- emerald-and-gray 1
- green 12
- olive green 1
- pale green 1

Blues 36 (15/23)
- aqua 1
- aquamarine 3
- blue 15
- bluish 1
- cobalt blue 2
- dark blue 1
- gray blue 1
- grayish blue 1
- greenish blue 1
- indigo 1
- lavender gray 1
- light blue 1
- navy blue 1
- pale blue 4
- sapphire 1
- sky blue 1

Purples 13 (6/8)
- dove gray 2
- lilac 2
- magenta 1
- mauve 2
- purple 4
- purplish 1
- violet 1

The total of different hues is 78.
The total incidence of various colors in *Pnin* is 237.

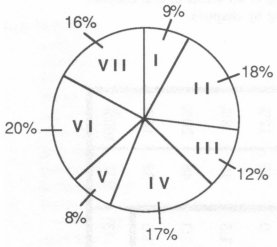
III. Color Distribution by Chapters

All hues are assigned, conventionally and in some cases roughly, to nine basic color ranges (see section II). Browns are separated from reds, but reds include oranges. The first figure signifies the frequency of the occurence of a color in the chapter; the second, its share in percentage points. For example, "I 4:18" in the first column means that Black occurs four times in Chapter One, which accounts for 18% of all colors in that chapter.

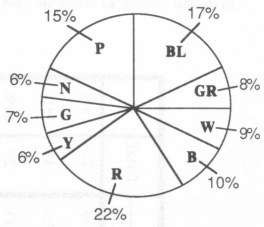
In the last column all colors are added up by chapters.

Chapter	Neutral			Chromatic						Total	%
	BLA	GRY	WHI	BRO	RED	YEL	GRE	BLU	PUR		
I	4:18	0	1:5	2:8	4:18	1:5	3:14	3:14	4:18	22	9%
II	6:14	6:14	6:14	5:12	10:23	0	4:9	3:7	3:7	43	18%
III	4:14	2:7	5:19	1:4	3:11	1:4	3:11	5:19	3:11	27	12%
IV	9:22	4:10	1:3	5:12	11:28	2:5	2:5	6:15	0	40	17%
V	0	0	3:16	2:11	9:47	1:5	1:5	2:11	1:5	19	8%
VI	7:15	5:10	4:8	4:8	11:23	4:8	2:4	10:21	1:3	48	20%
VII	10:27	2:5	2:5	5:13	5:13	5:13	1:3	7:18	1:3	38	16%
TOTAL	40	19	22	24	53	14	16	36	13	237	100%

CHAPTERS 1-7

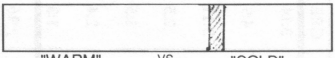


Percentage of All Color by Chapter

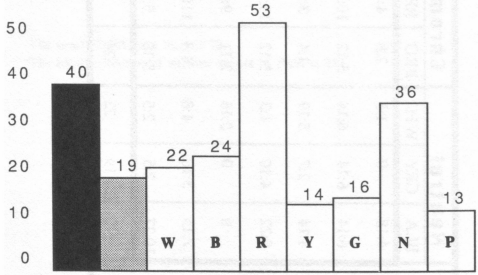


Total Percentages by Color

BL = Black
GR = Gray
W = White
B = Brown
R = Red
Y = Yellow
G = Green
N = Navy Blue
P = Purple



Ranges (aggregate)



NUMBER OF INCIDENTS

TOTAL: 237 Times
100 Percent

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